

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM MAGAZINE

Sight & Sound



NEIL JORDAN RESTAKES HIS CLAIM TO VAMPIRE TERRITORY

BYZANTIUM

PLUS

OLIVIER ASSAYAS'S 'SOMETHING IN THE AIR' • TV'S CONSCIENCE: TONY GARNETT
AUDREY TAUTOU ON CLAUDE MILLER • SCOTT FITZGERALD'S RIVIERA

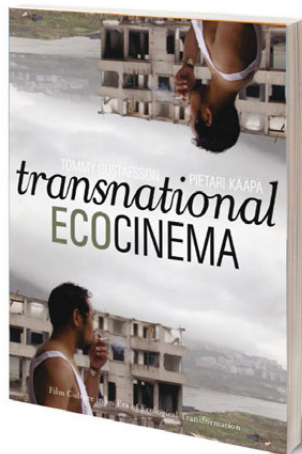
£4.50





intellect new books

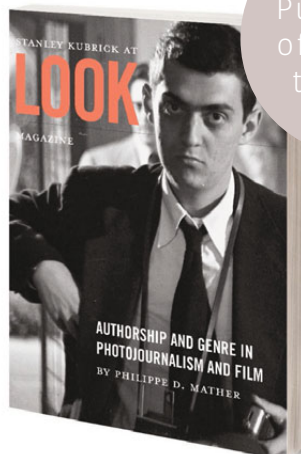
www.intellectbooks.com



Transnational Ecocinema

Film Culture in an Era of Ecological Transformation

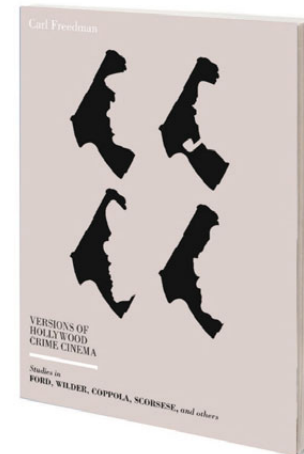
Edited by Tommy Gustafsson and Pietari Kääpä
ISBN 978-1-84150-729-3 | 216pp
£24.95 | 2013 | Paperback | 230x170mm
eBook available



Stanley Kubrick at Look Magazine

Authorship and Genre in Photojournalism and Film

By Philippe D. Mather
ISBN 978-1-84150-611-1 | 304pp
£14.95 | 2013 | Paperback | 230x170mm
eBook available



Versions of Hollywood Crime Cinema

Studies in Ford, Wilder, Coppola, Scorsese, and Others

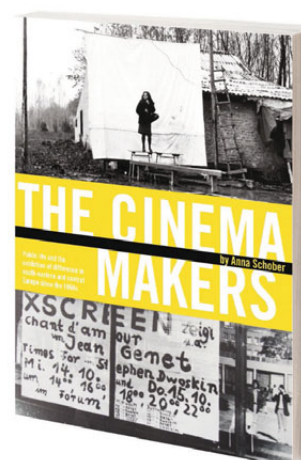
Carl Freedman
ISBN 978-1-84150-724-8 | 184pp
£15.95 | 2013 | Paperback | 230x170mm
eBook available



Australian Film Theory and Criticism, Vol. 1

Critical Positions

By Noel King, Constantine Verevis and Deane Williams
ISBN 978-1-84150-581-7 | 192pp
£19.95 | 2013 | Paperback | 230x170mm
eBook available



The Cinema Makers

Public Life and the Exhibition of Difference in South-Eastern and Central Europe since the 1960s

By Anna Schober
ISBN 978-1-84150-515-2 | 189pp
£24.95 | 2012 | Paperback | 230x170mm
eBook available



The Open Roads, Closed Borders

Contemporary French-Language Road Movie

Edited by Michael Gott and Thibaut Schilt
ISBN 978-1-84150-662-3 | 181pp
£45 | 2013 | Hardback | 230x170mm
eBook available

Henri-Georges Clouzot's

The Murderer Lives at 21

(L'Assassin habite au 21)



One of the most revered names in world cinema, Henri-Georges Clouzot, made a remarkably self-assured debut in 1942 with the deliciously droll thriller *The Murderer Lives at 21* [L'Assassin habite au 21].

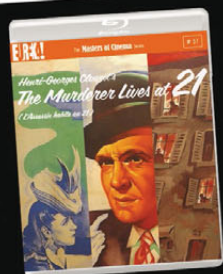
A thief and killer stalks the streets of Paris, leaving a calling card from "Monsieur Durand" at the scene of each crime. But after a cache of these macabre identifications is discovered by a burglar in the boarding house at 21 Avenue Junot, Inspector Wenceslas Vorobechik (Pierre Fresnay) takes lodging at the infamous address in an undercover bid to solve the crime, with help from his struggling-actress girlfriend Mila (Suzy Delair).

Special Features: • Gorgeous new Gaumont restoration of the film in its original aspect ratio, presented in 1080p HD on the Blu-ray • New and improved English subtitles • New interview with Ginette Vincendeau, professor of French cinema at King's College London • A fully-illustrated booklet, including the words of Henri-Georges Clouzot and rare imagery

The Masters of Cinema Series

The Murderer Lives at 21 available on Blu-ray and DVD,
The Complete (Existing) Sadao Yamanaka available on DVD.

Coming Soon: June: *Naked Island* (Shindô) • *Kuroneko* (Shindô) • *Tabu* (Murnau)
July: *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith) • *Le Pont du Nord* (Rivette)

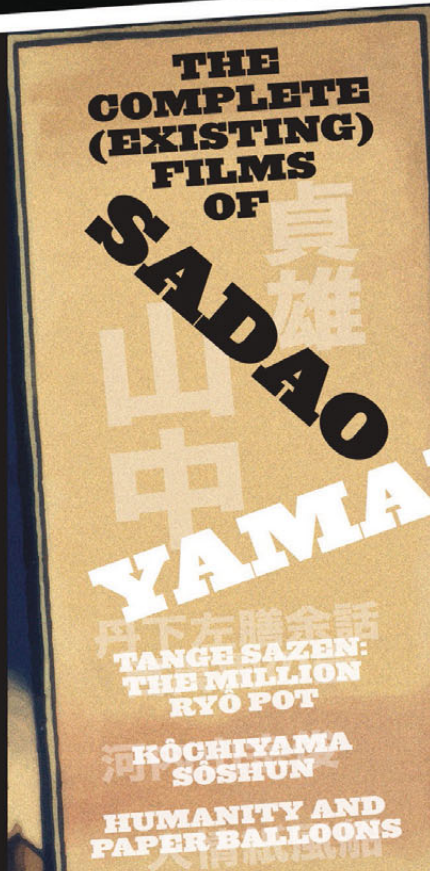


The brief but prodigious career of Japanese director Sadao Yamanaka resulted in a catalogue of work characterised by an elegant and unforced visual style, fluid editing, and a beautiful attention to naturalistic performances. Although he made 22 films over a six-year period (before dying on the frontline of WWII aged 29), only three of them survive, collected here for the first time in the West.

Contains the following films *Tange Sazen: The Million Ryô Pot*, *Kôchiyama Sôshun*, and *Humanity and Paper Balloons*.

The Masters of Cinema Series is delighted to present these treasures of world cinema in a long-awaited two-DVD set.

Special Features: • New digital transfers of all three films • New English subtitle translations • Rare fragments of other lost Yamanaka films • A new interview with critic and scholar Tony Rayns • A lengthy booklet, including Yamanaka's will, excerpts from his diaries, essays by Tony Rayns, Shinji Aoyama, Kimitoshi Satô, and more



Special
two-disc
DVD
Edition



The Masters of Cinema Series
mastersofcinema.org



Both released 20th May 2013

amazon.co.uk

Welcome



Two youthquakes and a pair of murderous mothers are what links this month's features. Olivier Assayas's *Something in the Air* (above and p.46) is a spot-on recreation of the rebellious 1970s among French youth, whereas F. Scott Fitzgerald's novels (p.34), *The Great Gatsby* included, portray the 'lost generation' of the 1920s, an extravagant era that also accounts for the modernist career of Marcel L'Herbier (p.40). Fitzgerald's favourite foreign haunt, the South of

France, is also the setting for Claude Miller's final film *Thérèse Desqueyroux* (p.52). Audrey Tautou plays a wife who poisons her husband because she feels she's suffocating, an emotion also shared by the female protagonist of Joachim Lafosse's *Our Children* (p.58). However, the protective mother vampire played by Gemma Arterton in Neil Jordan's *Byzantium* (p.28) is anything but constrained. And as Cannes approaches (p.10), frankly neither are we. Huzzah! **Nick James**



AFTER 'NOBODY KNOWS' AND 'STILL WALKING' COMES
THE NEW MASTERPIECE FROM KORE-EDA HIROKAZU

★★★★★ "EXTRAORDINARY"

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

"DELIGHTFUL AND UPLIFTING"

THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER



TIME OUT



TOTAL FILM



THE GUARDIAN



FINANCIAL TIMES



EVENING STANDARD



THE EXPRESS

"SOMETHING OF
A REVELATION"

INDIEWIRE

"A GEM OF
WORLD CINEMA"

JASON SOLOMONS - THE OBSERVER

I WISH



AVAILABLE VIA



DOWNLOAD

&



ON DEMAND

MAY
23



&



MAY
27



The S&S interview: Tony Garnett

The man acclaimed by the BBC director general as “the best television drama producer there has been” discusses his career – from *Cathy Come Home* to *This Life* – with **Mark Duguid**

FEATURES

28

COVER FEATURE: Between the lines

Neil Jordan talks to **Trevor Johnston** about *Byzantium*, a contemporary vampire story that breathes new life into the undead
PLUS **Kim Newman** on female vampires

34

Which side of paradise?

As a new version of *The Great Gatsby* arrives, the worlds of F. Scott Fitzgerald still have the power to fascinate us. By **Nick James**
PLUS **Pamela Hutchinson** on a lost *Gatsby*

40

The style council

The Fashion in Film Festival has found an ideal subject in the 1920s and 30s work of director Marcel L'Herbier. By **David Cairns**

46

Catch the wind

Olivier Assayas tells **Kieron Corless** about revisiting the 70s with *Something in the Air*, a semi-autobiographical tale of radical youth
PLUS **David Thompson** on how French cinema developed post-1968

52

A man for all seasons

Thérèse Desqueyroux proves a fitting swansong for the late French master of adaptation, Claude Miller. By **Nick Roddick**
PLUS **Nick James** talks to Audrey Tautou

58

Fear eats the soul

Our Children sees a case of child murder in Belgium in terms of Greek tragedy, director Joachim Lafosse tells **Thomas Dawson**

REGULARS

9 **Editorial** Cap in hand

26 **Reader Offers**

Rushes

10 **Nick James** previews this year's Cannes Film Festival

12 **Object Lesson: Hannah McGill** on the significance of roses in the movies

15 **David Jenkins** talks to director Tobias Lindholm about *A Hijacking*

16 **Dispatches: Mark Cousins** on how Northern Ireland learned to speak film

19 **Obituaries: Stephen Thrower** on Jesús Franco, **Paul Julian Smith** on Bigas Luna

The Industry

20 **Development Tale: Charles Gant** on Tom Shkolnik's *The Comedian*

21 **The Numbers: Charles Gant** on the self-distributed *Papadopoulos & Sons*

22 **Brewster: Ben Roberts** of the BFI Film Fund introduces a new column

23 **Profile: Geoffrey Macnab** on Lars von Trier's producer Peter Aalbæk Jensen

Festivals

25 **Kaya Genç** on battles for the cinematic heritage of Istanbul

Wide Angle

68 **Nathaniel Budzinski** on the online exhibition opportunities for artists' moving image

70 **Steven Erickson** on the unique niche occupied by Tibet's first film director

71 **Kieron Corless** visits the Cinéma du réel documentary festival in Paris

72 **Soundings: Frances Morgan** revisits the black-metal soundtrack of Harmony Korine's *Gummo*

73 **Primal Screen: Ian Christie** examines early silent cinema's appetite for scenes of classical destruction

74 **Bradlands: Brad Stevens** lifts the covers on an erotic short by Nicholas Ray

75 **Lost and Found: Ian Penman** resurrects an erotic fable by Kubrick's producer

Forum

76 **Stéphane Delorme** of *Cahiers du cinéma* and **Tony Rayns** debate the auteur status of the late, great Oshima Nagisa

78 **Letters**

Endings

128 **Ryan Gilbey** on *Before Sunset*



Book
now

Pompeii Live from the British Museum

Your exclusive private view of
Life and death in
Pompeii and Herculaneum

Live in cinemas in HD
For one night only
18 June 2013

britishmuseum.org/pompeilive
#PompeiiLive

Exhibition sponsored by

Goldman
Sachs

In collaboration with



The British
Museum

A street in Pompeii. © Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei.

(incorporating Monthly Film Bulletin)
Published monthly by the BFI

Editorial enquiries

21 Stephen Street London W1T 1LN
t: 020 7255 1444
f: 020 7580 5830
w: bfi.org.uk/sightandsound
e: S&S@bfi.org.uk

Social media

f: facebook.com/SightSoundmag
t: twitter.com/SightSoundmag

Subscriptions

t: 020 8955 7070
e: sightandsound@alliance-media.co.uk
Volume 23 Issue 6 (NS)
ISSN 0037-4806 USPS 496-040

CONTRIBUTORS

Nathaniel Budzinski is online editor at 'The Wire'

David Cairns writes the blog 'Shadowplay'

Ian Christie is president of Europa Cinemas and professor of film and media history at Birkbeck College, London. His latest book, as editor, is 'Audiences'

Thomas Dawson is a freelance film critic and interviewer based in London

Stéphane Delorme is editor-in-chief of 'Cahiers du cinéma'

Mark Duguid is a senior curator at the BFI National Archive

Kaya Genç's first novel 'L'avventura' was published in 2008

Ryan Gilbey is the film critic of 'New Statesman'

Pamela Hutchinson blogs about silent cinema at silentlondon.co.uk

David Jenkins is reviews editor at 'Little White Lies'

Trevor Johnston writes on film for 'Time Out' and the Script Factory

Hannah McGill is a freelance writer and critic

Frances Morgan is deputy editor of 'The Wire'

Ian Penman is a critic and writer

Tony Rayns's 25 years of involvement in Korean cinema are celebrated in Seo Wontae's documentary 'The Not-so Distant Observer'

Ben Roberts is director of the BFI Film Fund

Nick Roddick is the author of several books on cinema

Paul Julian Smith is distinguished professor in the Graduate Center, City University of New York

David Thompson is a director of arts documentaries

Stephen Thrower's study of Jess Franco's cinema is due for publication later this year

COVER

Gemma Arterton in 'Byzantium', retouched by Dawkins Colour

NEXT ISSUE

on sale 11 June

Contents Reviews

FILMS OF THE MONTH

- 86 *The Comedian*
- 88 *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*
- 90 *Something in the Air/Après mai*
- 92 *The Stoker/Kochegar*

FILMS

- 90 *Benjamin Britten: Peace and Conflict*
- 90 *Beware of Mr. Baker*
- 91 *The Big Wedding*
- 91 *Byzantium*
- 92 *Come as You Are/Hasta la vista*
- 93 *The Company You Keep*
- 94 *Deadfall*
- 94 *Dead Man Down*
- 95 *Easy Money/Snabba cash*
- 95 *Everybody Has a Plan/Todos tenemos un plan*
- 96 *G.I. Joe: Retaliation*
- 96 *A Haunted House*
- 97 *A Hijacking/Kapringen*
- 98 *The Host*
- 98 *Hummingbird*
- 99 *The Iceman*
- 100 *Iron Man 3*
- 101 *It's Such a Beautiful Day*
- 102 *The Lords of Salem*
- 103 *Mud*
- 104 *No One Lives*
- 104 *Oblivion*
- 105 *Olympus Has Fallen*
- 106 *Our Children/A perdre la raison*
- 106 *Populaire*
- 107 *Robosapien*
- 107 *Scary Movie V*
- 108 *The Stone Roses: Made of Stone*
- 108 *Thérèse Desqueyroux*
- 109 *Village at the End of the World*

HOME CINEMA

- 110 *Army of Shadows, Badlands, Billy Liar, Captured, Christine, Dracula, Evil Dead II, The Fury, Love Among the Ruins, The Master, A New Leaf, Roundabout, Scanners Trilogy, The Sea Gull, Second-Hand Hearts, Die Verrufenen: Der Fünfte Stand/Die Unehelichen (1926), Warriors of the Steppe – Myn Bala, Welsh Classics*

DVD features

- 110 **David Jenkins** revisits a trio of Polish classics
- 113 **Philip Kemp** on sex comedy, Japanese-style
- 116 **Patrick Russell** on the use of archive footage in Ken Loach's *The Spirit of '45*
- Television**
- 120 *Angels – Series 1, Ghostwatch: Behind the Curtains, Perlasca: The Courage of a Just Man*
- 121 **Rob Young** unearths a disturbing gem from the BBC vaults

BOOKS

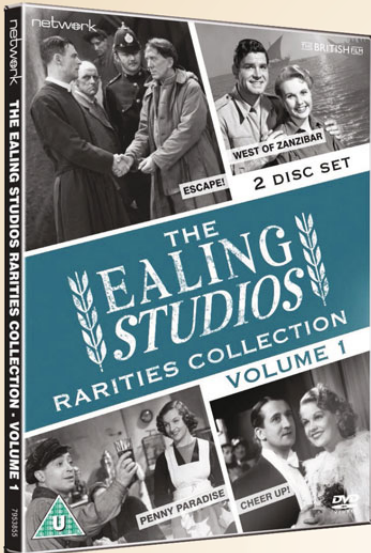
- 122 **Nick Pinkerton** on William Friedkin's surprisingly modest autobiography
- 123 **David Thompson** enjoys a reappraisal of Bardot
- 124 **Geoff Andrew** surveys a patchy but invaluable set of Eric Rohmer interviews
- 124 **Peter Tonguet** dips in to a memoir by Rita Moreno
- 125 **Tony Rayns** evaluates a book of essays about Joseph H. Lewis



And online this month Neorealism video essay: De Sica versus Selznick | Don Hertzfeldt | Fred Schepisi | Pedro Costa and Eugène Green | Cannes blog and more bfi.org.uk/sightandsound

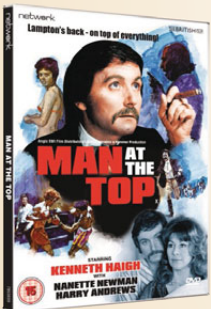
Network are proud to announce the launch of **The British Film** collection – a new range of classic films covering over half a century of British Cinema.

Showcasing a diverse mix of genres, **The British Film** collection features many titles that have never previously been released.



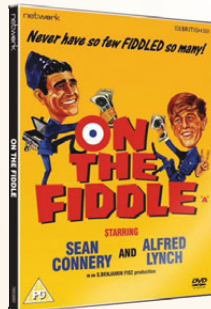
The Ealing Studios Rarities Collection Volume 1

Ealing Studios - a global byword for quality, quintessentially British cinema. This collection features four rare Ealing titles including *Escape!*, the very first Ealing production, and the early Carol Reed film *Penny Paradise*.



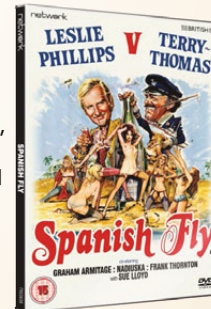
Man at the Top

The gritty 1973 film starring Kenneth Haigh as Joe Lampton; the aggressively ambitious protagonist who originated in John Braine's novel *Room at the Top*.



On the Fiddle

A year before he became Bond, Sean Connery starred in this comedy caper alongside Alfred Lynch and Stanley Holloway.



Spanish Fly

Screen icons Terry-Thomas and Leslie Phillips star in this vibrant mid-70s sex comedy set in sunny Menorca.



The House in Nightmare Park
Frankie Howerd stars in this hilarious horror spoof from *Doctor Who* and *Blake's 7* writer Terry Nation.



Edgar Wallace's Flying Fifty-Five
An exciting tale of double-crossing and blackmail from legendary thriller author Edgar Wallace.

ON DVD THIS APRIL

For the latest updates on Network products plus exclusive news and video content and to receive a monthly collectable The British Film PDF, visit www.networkonair.com

EDITORIAL

Editor

Nick James

Deputy editor

Kieron Corless

Features editor

James Bell

Web editor

Nick Bradshaw

Production editor

Isabel Stevens

Chief sub-editor

John Wrathall

Sub-editors

Paul Fairclough

Jane Lamcraft

Jamie McLeish

Ben Walters

Researchers

Mar Diestro-Dópido

Adam Howard

Credits supervisor

Patrick Fahy

Credits associate

Kevin Lyons

Pieter Sonke

James Piers Taylor

Design and art direction

chrisbrawndesign.com

Origination

Altimage

Printer

Wyndeham Group

BUSINESS

Publisher

Rob Winter

Publishing coordinator

Brenda Fernandes

Advertising consultant

Ronnie Hackston

Tel: 020 7957 8916

Mobile: 07799 605 212

Fax: 020 7436 2327

Email: ronnie.hackston@bfi.org.uk

Newsstand distribution

Comag Specialist

Tel: 01895 433800

Bookshop distribution

Central Books

Tel: 020 8986 4854

Sight & Sound (ISSN 0037-4806) is published monthly by British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1T 1LN and distributed in the USA by Mail Right Int., 1637 Stetson Road B4, Piscataway, NJ 08854.

Periodicals Postage Paid at Piscataway, NJ and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sight & Sound c/o Mail Right International Inc, 1637 Stetson Road B4, Piscataway NJ 08854.

Subscription office:

For subscription queries and sales of back issues and binders contact:

Subscription Department,

Sight & Sound, Alliance Media

PO Box 2068, Bournehall House

Bournehall Road, Bushey WD23 3ZF

Tel: 020 8955 7070

Fax: 020 8421 8244

Email: sightandsound@alliance-media.co.uk

Annual subscription rates:
UK £45, Eire and ROW £68
£10 discount for BFI members



Copyright © BFI, 2013

The views and opinions expressed in the pages of this magazine or on its website are those of the author(s) and are not necessarily those of the BFI or its employees. The contents of this magazine may not be used or reproduced without the written permission of the Publisher.

The BFI is a charity, (registration number 287780), registered at 21 Stephen St, London, W1T 1LN



Editorial Nick James



CAP IN HAND

Lately my spare moments have been taken up with the works of F. Scott Fitzgerald (see feature p.34). In literary terms, he's most often thought of as a luxury item, the jazz-age chronicler of extravagant parties among the super-rich where parvenus like Jay Gatsby pine for the attention of 'old money' beauties like Daisy Buchanan – the essence of his greatest novel *The Great Gatsby* (Baz Luhrmann's new movie adaptation of which opens Cannes on 15 May). But if there is something queasy-making about reading Fitzgerald's early work in today's climate of financial austerity and spreading misery, his later career fits the bill better: an alcoholic, deep in debt, seen by his peers as a has-been, the Fitzgerald of the 1930s Great Depression struggled to maintain a lifestyle anything like the one he had known in his heyday.

As far as his relevance to today is concerned, the first question to ask is who, if anyone, is the equivalent chronicler of today's super-rich? There are television shows that offer stage-managed peeks – such as *Millionaire Matchmaker*, *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, *The Hills* and *Made in Chelsea* – and there are documentaries about former rich people on the skids such as *The Queen of Versailles*, but none of these gives us the insights Fitzgerald did. It's important because those in the arts need to know if today's super-rich can develop the passion for culture that saw wealthy young Americans of Fitzgerald's generation fête the artists of Europe. There are some modern examples of this in the US, such as Megan Ellison, who bankrolled *Zero Dark Thirty*.

It's a vital matter to the UK because our government seems wilfully to misunderstand the contribution the arts make to the economy. Maria Miller, the culture secretary, has set out the government's position on funding the arts over the next few years in such a way as to prepare us for more cuts, even though, as playwright Dan Rebellato reminds us in *The Guardian*, current arts funding amounts to just 7p out of every £100 of public spending, in return for which the creative industries account for 6.2 per cent of the goods and services in the economy, £16.6 billion in exports and 2 million jobs. Miller's line is that, "When times are tough and money is tight, our focus must be on culture's economic impact." But having been already hit for cuts several times in recent years, government-funded agencies are at the point where serious infrastructural damage will be done, affecting not just the profits I've mentioned but also the gentle, pervasive impact

Having been hit for cuts several times in recent years, government-funded agencies are at the point where infrastructural damage will be done



of British 'soft power' on the rest of the world.

One perfect illustration of that soft power came with the intervention of Robert Redford, in town to promote Sundance London, who seems skeptical of private subsidy and who reminded Miller: "You have something in place that we [in America] don't have... and that's government funding... You want to say, 'Wait a minute, when you talk about economic impact, isn't it already there?'... A film is in a theatre, you have people working there, you have the filmmakers themselves, there's the employment that goes into getting a film made, and then distributing it – it all brings in a lot of money."

When I read this I thought of the young Redford in that huge flat cap playing gangster Gatsby in Jack Clayton's 1974 adaptation of Fitzgerald's novel. As the US example demonstrates, the arts in the UK are far more likely to go on flourishing with continuing government subsidy than they are with the intervention of businessmen like Jay Gatsby, whether or not they have nurtured a passion for the arts.

Roger Ebert (1942-2013)

The much-loved *Chicago-Sun Times* critic and television personality Roger Ebert has been beautifully honoured elsewhere since his death on 4 April – which came literally the day after he announced on Twitter a likely downturn in his output. So we will be holding back our full appreciation of Roger until our 2013 obituary special appears. But by way of marking the passing of this colossus of popular film writing, we'd like to remind you of his top ten in our 2012 poll of the greatest films of all time. We had no greater supporter of the poll than Roger, who publicised it endlessly and unselfishly. Here are his ten in descending order: *Aguirre*, *Wrath of God*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Citizen Kane*, *La dolce vita*, *The General*, *Raging Bull*, 2001: *A Space Odyssey*, *The Tree of Life*, *Tokyo Story*, *Vertigo* (for his comments, see explore.bfi.org.uk/sightandsoundpolls/2012). Roger, we tip our hats to you.

IN THE FRAME

COMPETITIVE SPIRIT



Quinzaine contender: 'The Selfish Giant', British director Clio Barnard's follow-up to 'The Arbor'

Can the announcement of the Official Selection for Cannes ever quite live up to the fevered anticipation?

By Nick James

On seeing this year's Cannes Competition line-up my first reaction was that it was slightly underwhelming. Within half an hour, however, I was enthused. But what was it about this particular cluster of films that took some coming round to? Was it something to do with the dance of hope and speculation that precedes the week of Cannes announcements? Far too many films are paraded then – on the slenderest evidence – as likely contenders, building dizzying expectations that cannot be met. Or can they?

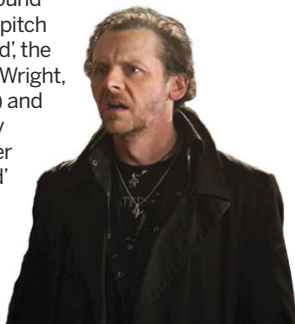
By the time the actual Competition list was published, I felt a mulish tendency to resist the more outré choices of Cannes boss Thierry Frémaux. Certain names registered with little thuds of doubt: Baz Luhrmann (OTT), the Coens (getting too predictable), Desplechin (self-consciously quirky), Sorrentino (overfond of grandiose shots), Ozon (skates surfaces), Winding Refn (self-indulgent with macho gestures). Each of these directors has made terrific work, but each – like nearly all filmmakers – has also made a disappointment or two. But then the prospects grew rosier as I pondered how dazzlingly extravagant the visuals of *The Great Gatsby* might be, what the Coens might make of the 1960s folk era in *Inside Llewyn Davis*, what kind of distilled cool the Refn/Ryan Gosling partnership might bring to their Thailand-set drugs-trade revenge thriller *Only God Forgives*, how slyly Ozon's teenage portrait *Young & Beautiful* might beguile us...

Other question marks still hovered, however. What is it about James Gray's work, for instance, that enthralled French and American critics but leaves the British unimpressed? His films seem to me quite run-of-the-mill genre dramas slowed down and lit beautifully for effect, but I'm hoping his pimp-prostitute-saviour triangle *The Immigrant* will be the one that converts me. Meanwhile, the way in which French producers so often recruit the best international auteurs and turn them into

ON OUR
RADAR

Edgar Wright

"A sci-fi film set around a pub crawl" is the pitch for 'The World's End', the third part of Edgar Wright, Simon Pegg (right) and Nick Frost's loosely linked trilogy – after 'Shaun of the Dead' and 'Hot Fuzz'. The highly anticipated film is released in the UK on 19 July.



Satyajit Ray

A full retrospective of the films of the great Indian director (right) plays at BFI Southbank, London throughout August and September. The BFI is also rereleasing Ray's 1963 film 'The Big City' ('Mahanagar') in cinemas nationwide on 16 August. Before then, Artificial Eye releases Ray's 1964 classic 'Charulata' on Blu-ray on 24 June.





Nose to nose: Mathieu Amalric in Arnaud Desplechin's 'Jimmy P.: Psychotherapy of a Plains Indian'

quasi-French directors has me worried for Asghar Farhadi's Paris-set love story *The Past*.

On the other hand, the listing of Polanski's *Venus in Fur*, Soderbergh's *Behind the Candelabra*, Alexander Payne's *Nebraska*, Koreeda's *Like Father, Like Son*, Jia Zhangke's *A Touch of Sin* and Mahamet-Saleh Haroun's *Gris-Gris* just seems apt. As for directors newly promoted to the big league – such as Amat Escalante with *Heli*, his portrait of a young man searching for his father, and Dutch sixtiesomething Alex van Warmerdam with *Borgman* – we can only sniff the air and anticipate what they've done to deserve the honour.

Usually the Un Certain Regard sidebar contains some films you might take or leave. Certainly, making Sofia Coppola's *Bling Ring* the opening film feels like a consolation prize. But why Claire Denis's *Bastards* is here – and what she has to do to make the Competition – I don't know; for me she is unquestionably one of the best half-dozen directors alive. I'm keen, too, to see newcomer Ryan Coogler's Sundance prize-winning study of an unwitting victim of police violence, *Fruitvale Station*. I know nothing about Lav Diaz's *Norte, The End of History* other than that it's four hours long. There are first films from Valeria Golino, Flora Lau and Diego Quemada-Diez that also intrigue.

The indications that we may be in for a vintage Cannes, however, can be found in the selections announced for Directors' Fortnight

and Critics' Week, which seem to be providing greater depth than ever. For the Quinzaine, I'm partisan about Clio Barnard's *The Selfish Giant* and delighted for Ari Folman's *The Congress*. It has to be a bonus, too, that the long-invisible heavyweights Marcel Ophüls and Alejandro Jodorowsky both have new films to show. A little judicious online digging reveals that Critics' Week also has a confident air.

Altogether, therefore, the absence from the festival of Woody Allen, Breillat, Corbijn, Cuarón, Egoyan, Gilliam, Glazer, Greengrass, Gondry, Hong Sangsoo, Jarmusch, Lanzmann, Malick, McQueen and Reichardt – all of whose forthcoming films have at some point been tipped as Cannes contenders – is not to be mourned. When a film is rejected for Cannes, the official line is often that it 'wasn't ready' – but at the same time there are many cases where films genuinely do miss the cut because they can't be completed in time. It's often the case, too, that a film fresh from the editor's hard drive will be seen in Cannes in a version that's never seen again, because the response of the press and public may indicate the need for further cuts or even reshoots. That's what's thrilling about the festival – you're often seeing the best filmmakers pushing their work to the limit. 



Keep track of what S&S contributors make of this year's crop via our rolling festival coverage online at bfi.org.uk/sightandsound

ANATOMY OF A MOVIE BYZANTIUM

23% *Daughters of Darkness* (1971)

19% *Interview with the Vampire* (1994)

15% *Let the Right One In* (2008)

13% *Near Dark* (1987)

9% *Blood and Roses* (1960)

8% *The Vampire Lovers* (1970)

5% *Mona Lisa* (1986)

4% *Venus* (2006)

2% *Don't Look Now* (1973)

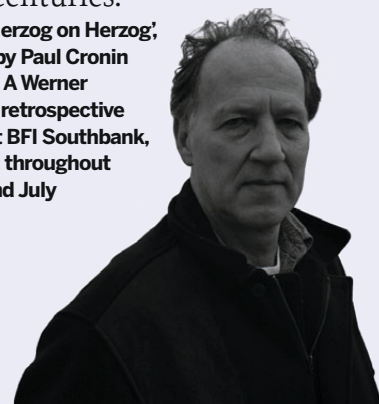
2% *Séance on a Wet Afternoon* (1964)



QUOTE OF THE MONTH WERNER HERZOG

"According to its nature, film does not have so much to do with reality as it does with our collective dreams. It chronicles our state of mind. The purpose [of the filmmaker] is to record and guide, as chroniclers did in past centuries."

From 'Herzog on Herzog', edited by Paul Cronin (2002). A Werner Herzog retrospective plays at BFI Southbank, London throughout June and July



Edinburgh Film Festival

This year's festival should continue the revival initiated last year by new artistic director Chris Fujiwara. The programme isn't yet announced, but the closing film is 'Not Another Happy Ending', with Karen Gillan (right), 30 June



The Birth of a Nation

The founding text of modern cinema? A racist diatribe? D.W. Griffith's controversial 1915 film (right) is of course both things and more, and it's getting a DVD and Blu-ray release from Eureka/Masters of Cinema in June, alongside other releases from the always vital label, among them Jacques Rivette's rarely seen 1981 film 'Le Pont du Nord'.



Pacific Rim

Of all the year's summer blockbusters – 'Man of Steel', 'Iron Man 3', Michael Bay's 'Pain and Gain' – the one we at S&S have highest hopes for is Guillermo del Toro's 'Pacific Rim' (right), about how an alien attack on Earth is fought off by giant, human-piloted robots. If anyone can, del Toro can...



SAY IT WITH FLOWERS

Roses in the movies are charged with sexual symbolism, evoking both female virginity and male temptation



By Hannah McGill

Like King Lear, the father in Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête* (1946) has three daughters; like Lear, he draws down disaster and banishment

upon his favourite. When an apparent financial windfall sends him away on a trip, Adélaïde and Félicie want exotic, showy gifts – brocades, jewels, fans – but Belle (played by Josette Day), their uncomplaining household drudge, requests only a rose. The poor girl just wants to beautify her drab existence, but roses in cinema seem rarely to get away with merely being beautiful. David Lynch might have claimed that the red roses blooming against picket fences in the opening sequence of *Blue Velvet* (1986) were there because such all-American imagery “makes me feel so happy”; the ensuing close-up shot still depicts insects devouring one another in the soil at the flowers’ roots.

Cocteau is no less disingenuous than Lynch in his onscreen preamble to *La Belle et la Bête*, in which he asks us to take what we’re about to see literally, as he claims a child would: “Children

believe what we tell them... They believe that a plucked rose may bring tragic consequences to a family... I ask of you a little of this childlike sympathy.” But Cocteau, though he rejected much of Freud’s teaching on childhood sexuality, knew perfectly well that the erotic and traumatic overtones of fairytales are plain enough to have force even for children.

The experience of Belle’s father, which we see in flashback as related by him, can be read as a Freudian fever dream about loss and impotence (it comes directly after he receives the news that he’s broke), incestuous desire and the marrying off of daughters. Caught in the act of stealing a rose from the garden of the Beast (played by Jean Marais), Belle’s father is forced to choose either death or the delivery of one of his daughters to perish in his place. In other words, since he is not permitted to claim Belle’s ‘rose’ for himself, his fatherly destiny is to lose her – by dying or by allowing her to be taken from him and deflowered by a ‘beast’ against whose vigour he cannot compete. For the transgression of loving Belle too much and wanting to entrap her in his home, his punishment is to be unmanned by a rival jailor – or potential son-in-law.

So the rose over which they quarrel can be seen as representative of Belle’s virginity, or her sexual self. When the Beast first surprises Belle’s father, the stolen flower is roughly buffeted by the storm of his anger. This violence, implicitly against Belle’s person, recalls the clumsy physical assault with which her suitor



‘Blue Velvet’

Avenant has lately attempted to seduce her and prefigures the dead faint into which she will fall when she herself meets the Beast. One way or another, sexual ravishment awaits her.

The visual link between roses and female sexuality was acknowledged by Freud – “Blossoms and flowers represent the female genitals, or more particularly, virginity,” he wrote in his *General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* – but not much explored, perhaps because he tended to regard female genitalia as expressive of a lack rather than a positive presence. More useful to him as ‘yonic symbols’ were empty receptacles waiting to be filled or entered – caves, cups, hollows and bowls – than flowers, which are labyrinthine and petalled, but complete and enclosed.

Even Georgia O’Keeffe, the artist most closely associated with flowers as vaginal



Nipped in the bud: Belle is presented with the all-important rose in Cocteau’s *La Belle et la Bête*



'American Beauty'

imagery, famously denied that she had intended any such association. Cinema has been a touch more upfront. Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) gives clear visual articulation to its theme of stifled female sexuality with a shot of a rosebud being squished in a flower-press. In *American Beauty* (1999), dreams of rose petals lure mid-life schlub Lester (Kevin Spacey) towards the teenage nymphet of his dreams. (Though on determining that the faux-precocious Heather really has yet to be deflowered, Lester locates his conscience and balks).

Yet more outright affiliation of the floral with the feminine comes in the *Sight & Sound* poll's all-time greatest movie, *Vertigo* (1958). Carlotta, subject of the portrait with which Kim Novak's 'Madeleine' affects to be obsessed, holds a posy of pink roses. In Scottie's dream sequence, the

Not permitted to claim Belle's 'rose' for himself, his fatherly destiny is to lose her – by allowing her to be deflowered

flowers unfurl and spin apart, visually linking with a trio of images: the spiral staircase in the fateful church tower in which Scottie and Madeleine will end up, the coiled knot in which Carlotta and Madeleine wear their hair, and (in a piece of yonic symbolism of which Freud would certainly approve) an open, empty grave.

As in *La Belle et la Bête*, the rose implies both female sexual autonomy and male sexual temptation. In penetrating its labyrinth, a man risks envelopment, confusion and loss of self; Hitchcock is arguably less interested than Cocteau in what the woman gains or loses by the deal.

Saul Bass, author of the *Vertigo* dream sequence, would revisit densely coloured and richly suggestive floral imagery in 1993 for the title sequence of Martin Scorsese's *The Age of Innocence*. Here, time-lapse flowers lushly unfold, layered over with the pattern of a lace curtain: man-made prettiness inadequately masking nature at its most voluptuous.

It's the same clash that occurs between Belle's request for a rose and her sisters' pleas for brocade. They accuse her of modesty but maybe their problem with her is quite the reverse: the rose shows that for all their showy femininity, she's the truly sensual one, and thus the one with hidden power. 🍷

THE FIVE KEY...

SCOTT FITZGERALD FILMS

With Baz Lurhmann's new version of *The Great Gatsby* about to hit our screens, when better to gauge the cinematic legacy of F. Scott Fitzgerald?



By Philip Kemp

Poor Scott never had much luck with the cinema. His years of toiling in MGM's script department (fictionalised in the 'Pat Hobby'

stories) furnished just one script credit, for *Three Comrades*, and even that was heavily rewritten by its producer Joseph Mankiewicz. "Oh Joe," wailed Scott, "can't a producer ever be wrong? I'm a good writer – honest." As for the Fitzgerald movies...



2 Tender Is the Night (1962)

Fitzgerald's last completed novel, based on his fraught marriage to Zelda, gets the long, slow, talky treatment from workhorse director Henry King. Its sole virtue: the sumptuous 'Scope colour. So Fox have just released it on DVD – *panned-and-scanned*.



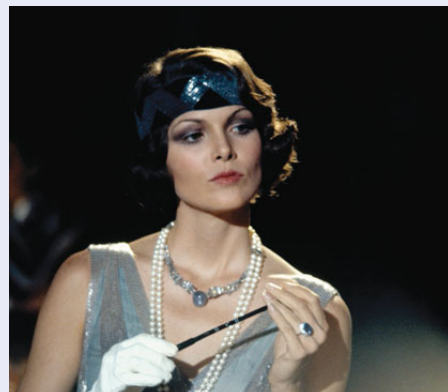
4 The Last Tycoon (1976)

An adaptation of Fitzgerald's final, unfinished novel (loosely inspired by Irving Thalberg), this finds screenwriter Harold Pinter curiously disengaged and director Elia Kazan well past his glory years, despite a stellar cast headed by Robert De Niro. Ponderous stuff, with a fudged resolution.



1 Three Comrades (1938)

A bid to repeat the success of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, this version of Erich Maria Remarque's novel set in post-1918 Germany is hamstrung by Metro's fear of offending the Nazis, for all the swooning romanticism of director Frank Borzage.



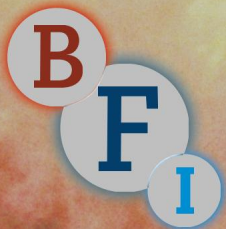
3 The Great Gatsby (1974)

The 1926 silent version has vanished; the 1948 version with Alan Ladd is all moody gloom. This plushly upholstered Robert Redford vehicle from British director Jack Clayton is ill-paced, miscast and sorely lacking in resonance. Over to you, Baz...



5 The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (2008)

Hugely expanded from Fitzgerald's 1922 short story, David Fincher's 167-minute tribute to the art of prosthetics has Brad Pitt's Benjamin born ancient and regressing to babyhood. Fitzgerald's comic squib has spawned a misguided attempt at profundity.



THE BFI MEDIA CONFERENCE

4 – 5 July **2013**

The BFI Media Conference at BFI Southbank is a unique professional development event for UK teachers of film and media at 16+ and 18+ to meet, learn and be inspired.



**Sign up for the Early Bird offer until 24 May
and save up to 20% off the standard price**

Find out more
bfi.org.uk/education/conferences

TIME IS ON THEIR SIDE

Tobias Lindholm, the writer behind Danish dramas *Borgen* and *The Hunt*, takes to the high seas with *A Hijacking*

By David Jenkins

A protracted negotiation between Somali pirates and the Danish CEO of a shipping firm is the basis for Tobias Lindholm's high tension anti-thriller *A Hijacking* (*Kapringen*), which plays like a meticulous, Melvillian exploration of process and detail that pointedly eschews the fireworks of the Hollywood disaster genre. Alongside writing credits that include Thomas Vinterberg's Cannes prizewinner *The Hunt* and the popular noir TV serial *Borgen*, Lindholm has cemented his reputation as one of Denmark's most formidable filmmaking talents.

David Jenkins: Why is it called 'A Hijacking' rather than 'The Hijacking'?

Tobias Lindholm: For me the title distances the film from the action genre. It says that it's more than the hijacking which is the issue. It signals the objectivity of the way we told the story.

DJ: With such a heavy focus on the technicalities of the negotiation, it seems like it would've been a tough film to write.

TL: The biggest battles are won with just me and my computer. I did a lot of reading around the subject. I saw a few documentaries, read interviews, and then I sat down at my computer and tried to develop a logical structure for the story. That took me half a year. I eventually realised that this was a film of phone calls. It was a great way to connect these two worlds.

DJ: During writing, what did you learn about how people talk on phones?

TL: I made it clear to the producers that in the film we needed to do these phone calls live. I talked to the actors about this. I told them that I would write them lines to say, but basically the responsibility of the phone calls is theirs. I took a satellite phone onto the ship and called the actors back in Denmark. Søren Malling, who plays the CEO, would be in his kitchen at home waiting for a call. You can see that Søren gets used to the echo and the delay. At a certain point he even starts to delay his own speech. I thought it would be very boring if the sound was very clear and crisp on those calls. When I call my wife and I'm out travelling there's always some kind of delay on the cellphones and we spend the first 30 seconds of the conversation trying to figure out who's going to speak first. It adds tension.

DJ: What were the technical issues of shooting on a freighter?

TL: We had already done a film in a prison called *R* [2009], which was about men in small rooms. The cinematographer, Magnus Nordenhof Jønck, tried to develop on the work he had done there. But then getting on the ship, it was not what we were expecting. The monsoon season was supposed to have ended, but it hadn't. There were lots of big waves out there. There were lots of seasick people. We lit the entire ship in advance so we could just follow the actors around naturally. I had not been on that many



A question of process: writer-director Tobias Lindholm

freighters. I also discovered that the real crew members of the ship had already been hijacked.

DJ: Was it a similar scale to this hijacking?

TL: It was smaller scale: not as professional and the money wasn't that big. I learned that they put the sailors from the Western world in one place, and all the others in another, usually down below because those guys are not worth any money.

DJ: The film is also about the crude process of capitalism.

TL: I was brought up in good old socialist Scandinavia. My mother – who's great and I love her – told me when I was little that if you are rich, you have stolen your money from other people. I knew pretty soon that it wasn't the whole truth. I don't believe that there are good guys and bad guys. I also don't believe that all rich guys are evil. It was very important to give the CEO a human face. It would've been far too obvious to have a greedy guy who didn't want to pay. The pirates are not just bad people either. I wanted to soften the clichés of the world as black and white. The thing with piracy is that it is a product of capitalism.

DJ: We also see an absurd face of capitalism.

TL: Yes, we do. I talked to this Russian CEO who had a ship hijacked. The pirates demanded \$10 million for the ship and the crew, and he

paid right away. He had a lot of money and he wanted to close the deal quickly. But as soon as he paid, the pirates said they want \$20 million more. And what happened in the end was that it took so long to negotiate, the army was sent in. At the same time, the prices of all the other ships in the area rose. Doing the obvious thing of paying ended up hurting the men and their families, but also shifted the market of piracy.

DJ: The film also addresses the idea of people in power making decisions on behalf of a displaced, unknowable underclass.

TL: In the first draft of the film I had a third point of view which was from a pirate, but I couldn't make it work. Then I worked out why: I'm this tall, spoilt, well-fed white guy and I had never been hungry enough to want to kill. I have never lost family members to hunger or war. This is the problem the CEO has in the film: he simply can't understand these guys. Every time I wrote about these pirates it would be some Robin Hood fantasy: they're not bad, they're just hungry. And of course that's not the whole truth. I could not get into that reality, so I got out of it. But it added a dimension to the CEO's world because this is the problem he had. The third-party negotiator played by Gary Porter [a real corporate hostage negotiator who was a consultant in the writing of the film] says the line, "We can't pressure these guys. Time means nothing to them." For affluent Westerners, time is everything. It's like dealing with someone who exists without gravity. We could never understand the reality of that situation. 

 **'A Hijacking' is released in the UK on 10 May, and is reviewed on page 97**

The monsoon season was supposed to have ended, but it hadn't. There were lots of big waves, lots of seasick people

THEM AND US

For the Northern Irish, like most peoples of the world, cinema is something that's been done *to* them, not *by* them



By Mark Cousins

A few days ago, the Belfast-based documentary filmmaker Brian Henry Martin asked me if I would be interested in

collaborating on a film about how Northern Ireland has been portrayed in movies. The recent success of the Belfast punk film *Good Vibrations* and, a few years ago, Steve McQueen's H-block movie *Hunger* has, perhaps, raised the question among Northern Irish movie lovers like Brian and me: how did we get here? How did the silver screen's otherness become less so to us? How did we make it 'one of us' rather than 'one of them'?

These are questions for most of the world. Only a few countries like America and France, film's co-inventors, can venture to say that cinema was done *by* them not *to* them. For whole continents such as Africa, movies were a new foreign language that humiliated, that couldn't give a fuck about local or indigenous truth – the Tarzan movies, for example. This would have been less of a problem if said language had not been so fascinating, thought-provoking and sexy – if it hadn't been so good at what Roland Barthes called “the hypnosis of the lifelike”. The lustre of film made the fact that others did it to us all the more bitter-sweet. Countries all around the world entered into an S&M relationship with this new language. It beat us with stereotypes of ourselves, and we wanted more. How could we not? When had a new language last been born? In the modern world, languages are things that die. They don't just come to life, agog and precocious, and yet that's what cinema did.

So we (by which I mean people in Belfast, Senegal, Boston, Shiraz, St Petersburg, Gothenburg, Nice, São Paulo, Krakow, Bristol and anywhere that wasn't a film-production centre in the earliest years of the movies) listened rather than spoke – which was rare for us as we'd excelled in novels, poetry, plays and music (Van Morrison for a start) for generations. It hardly occurred to many of us that we could speak this new language too. We were happy to listen to its cadences. Eventually we did



'Odd Man Out'



Northern Ireland finds its voice: 'Good Vibrations'

come to speak it and so the story of our active relationship with the new language began.

It's easiest to understand this relationship in almost fairytale terms. It started in silence. In the first years of the movies, Belfast spoke hardly a cinematic word. Then came ventriloquism. Filmmakers from abroad spoke for us. A film like Carol Reed's *Odd Man Out* (1947) was baroque puppetry. It's set in Belfast, tells the story of an IRA man on the run and meticulously recreates real Northern Irish places like the Crown Bar in Belfast, and yet its voice comes from actor James Mason, writer F.L. Green, cinematographer Robert Krasker etc. They spoke for us. And even, in these years, when we did make it to the big screen – Hollywood actor Stephen Boyd, who was in William Wyler's *Ben Hur*, was born and brought up in Northern Ireland – you couldn't tell where we were from.

For my generation, the fiction film that took us beyond ventriloquism was Neil Jordan's *Angel* in 1982. Jordan was from the Republic of Ireland but his film had Stephen Rea in the lead role; seeing him on the big screen, where Marilyn Monroe and Robert De Niro lived,

For whole continents such as Africa, movies were a new foreign language that couldn't give a fuck about local truth



'Hunger'

was astounding. *Angel* heralded a phase of monoglossism in Northern Irish film, a time of one-off voices that came along and stormed the cinema citadel. John Lynch spoke our language in *Cal* (1984), as did Liam Neeson, and TV chipped in with Liverpoolian Alan Clarke's cinematic, mute *Elephant* (1989). Soon there was Kenneth Branagh, who counter-colonised by kidnapping the Bard.

Come the 1990s, mono- gave way to the polyglottism of *Some Mother's Son*, *In the Name of the Father*, Terry George, Anne Crilly and more; gradually, our debate, our dialogue was on screen rather than only in the pubs. Our film festivals became places where we enriched our movie voice and sharpened its grammar. As with many other countries, government funding meant that talented movie people weren't just left to sink or swim.

As for most of Africa, the Middle East and cinema's second nations, movie polyglottism in Northern Ireland meant divergence and accented filmmaking. Accustomed to being peripheral to cinema, we discovered our own centres and peripheries. We see new things when we speak of our old selves in a new language. To do so allows us to dump old stuff but also to have experiences like Rutger Hauer's in Nicolas Roeg's film *Eureka*, when he looks at himself in the mirror and says, “I thought it would be you.” It's a relief to see yourself on the big screen, a confidence boost, but it's disappointing too. Is *that* what we look like and sound like?

Once we've seen films like *Hunger* and *Good Vibrations*, we ask what comes next? The movie mirror doesn't engulf or sate. It affirms and confers a kind of new relief and regard but, if you are vigilant at all about what you think, you come to realise that the show isn't over. The spotlight startles, there's an afterimage which blinds a bit. Suddenly you want something more? As Heraclitus put it: “Whoever cannot seek the unforeseen sees nothing, for the known way is an impasse.” Maybe finding a complex voice is an impasse? If so, what lies beyond? Not silence again? ☹

DIGITALLY RESTORED

STARRING **PETER CUSHING** AS **DOCTOR WHO**
IN THE TIMELORD'S ONLY FEATURE FILMS



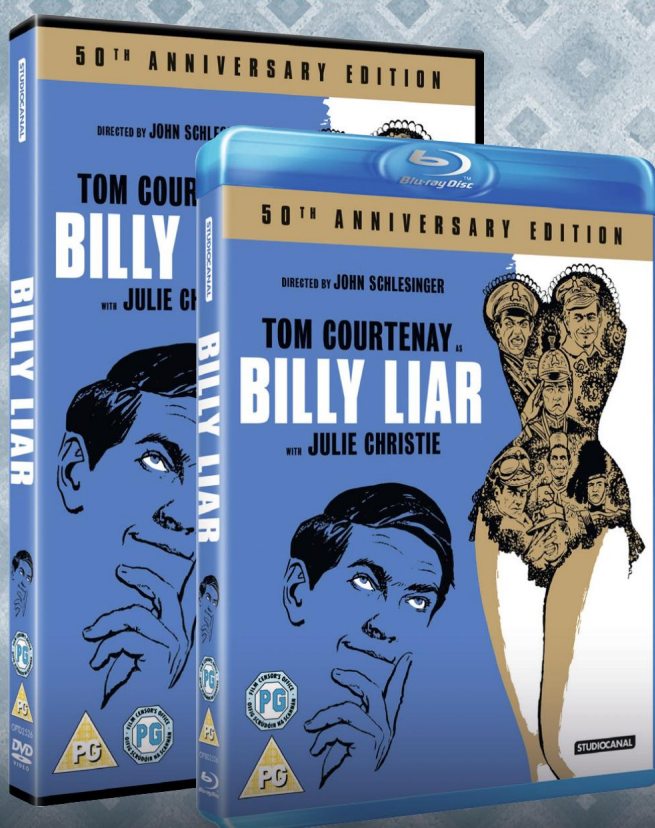
Also available on DVD

Special Features Include

Brand New Interviews ☺ Restoration Featurettes ☺ *Dalekmania* Film
Cast Commentary ☺ Photo Galleries ☺ Trailers

OWN ON BLU-RAY FOR THE FIRST TIME MAY 27

50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



**"RELEVANT, POIGNANT AND
HUGELY ENTERTAINING"**



EMPIRE

ALL NEW SPECIAL FEATURES INCLUDING:

- Interview with stars of the film Tom Courtenay and Helen Fraser
- Richard Ayoade discusses Billy Liar
- A Look through the Keith Waterhouse Archive

**ON DVD AND
BLU-RAY™ NOW**
amazon.co.uk

Programme content © 1962 CANAL + IMAGE UK LTD All Rights Reserved.

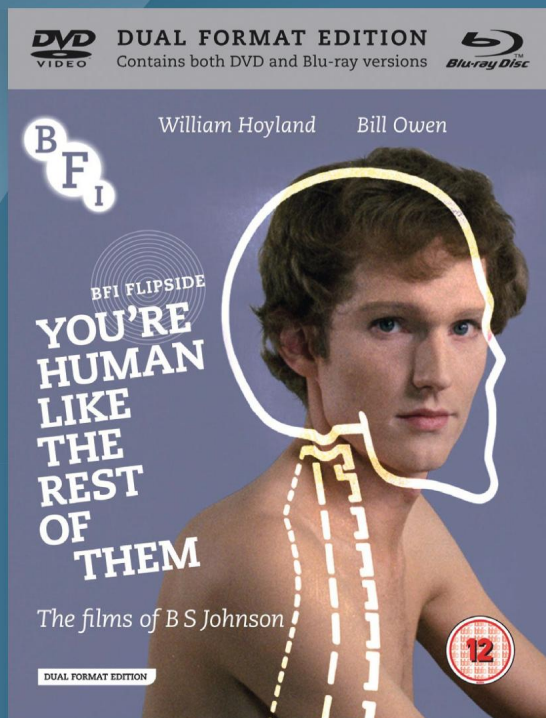
Free Super Saver Delivery and Unlimited One-Day Delivery with Amazon Prime are available. Terms and Conditions apply. See Amazon.co.uk for details.

STUDIOCANAL



NEW FROM FLIPSIDE

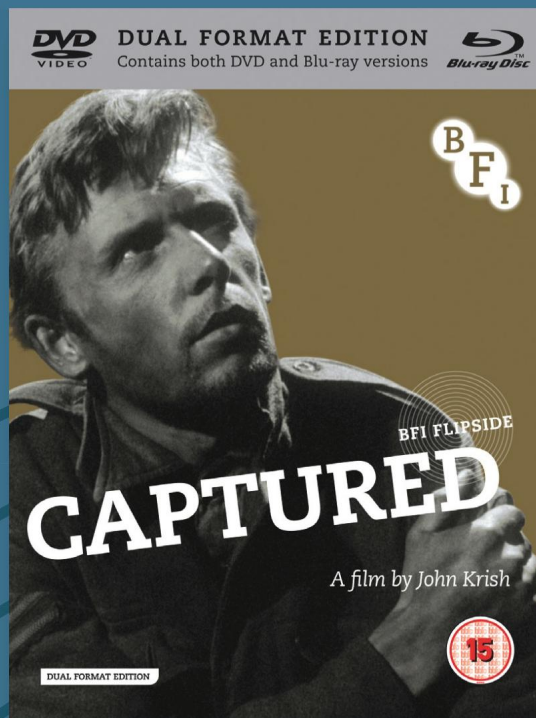
Rescuing weird and wonderful British films from obscurity and presenting them in new high-quality editions



Best known as a ground-breaking novelist, B S Johnson was also the director of some extraordinary and daring films which have been out of circulation for years. This collection makes these films available for the first time.

'Every time BFI Flipside releases a newly discovered film I always go and get it. It's like finding lost treasure.'

NICOLAS WINDING REFN
(award-winning director of *Bronson* and *Drive*)



Cult director John Krish is celebrated in this collection including his stunning, previously 'restricted' POW drama from 1959 alongside other rare and hard-hitting films, and a newly filmed interview with Krish.

Recent releases from BFI Flipside:



bfi.org.uk

Released 15 April on amazon.co.uk

JESUS 'JESS' FRANCO (1930-2013)

An extraordinary 180-film career took the Spanish director from assisting Orson Welles to churning out horror and pornography

By Stephen Thrower

Spanish filmmaker Jesús Franco Manera, aka Jess Franco, who died in Málaga on 2 April at the age of 82, leaves behind an astonishingly vast body of work comprising more than 180 movies. Tirelessly addicted to the creation of his own voyeuristically charged screen universe, Franco quite literally lived to shoot. Even after the death of his beloved muse and longterm partner Lina Romy in February 2012, he fought back and mounted one more production, *Al Pereira vs the Alligator Ladies*, which premiered at the Sitges Film Festival just a fortnight before his death.

Franco's early mentor in the industry was Juan Antonio Bardem, for whom he worked frequently as assistant director in the 1950s. He directed his first feature, *Tenemos 18 años*, in 1959, but international success came with 1962's *Gritos en la noche* (sold abroad as *The Awful Dr. Orloff*), a ghoulish tale mixing Gothic horror with echoes of Franju's *Eyes Without a Face* (1960). A chance encounter with Orson Welles in 1965 led to Franco being invited to shoot second unit on *Chimes at Midnight* that year. A jealous rival tried to scupper the assignment by whispering to Welles that he should watch a recent 'abomination' by Franco, *Riffifi en la ciudad* (1963). But Welles saw the film and loved it (not least for its obvious Wellesian touches), and



Reel Jesus: Franco in the editing suite

the two became friends, with Franco assisting on the American's unfinished *Don Quixote*.

The pivotal Franco film of the 1960s is *Necronomicon – Geträumte Sünden* (aka *Succubus*, 1967), about a nightclub dominatrix manipulated into murder by a mysterious Svengali: its languid, oneiric texture would provide a template for much of his best work. Fritz Lang was a fan, declaring it "the first erotic film I've seen all the way through because it's a beautiful piece of cinema". However its explicitness brought Franco into conflict with the Spanish censors, and he was forced to look further afield for

financing. Between 1968 and 1970 he made nine comparatively well-budgeted films for British producer Harry Alan Towers, including *Marquis de Sade's Justine* (1968) with Klaus Kinski and *Count Dracula* (1970) starring Christopher Lee, although the best was *Venus in Furs* (1969), a *sui-generis* poetic fantasy heavily influenced by Franco's love of jazz.

In the 1970s he accelerated production, completing six films in 1971, seven in 1972, and eleven in 1973; at one point in 1974 he found himself working on five simultaneously. Highlights of the period include a string of mesmeric sex-and-horror hybrids: *Vampyros Lesbos* (1970), *Virgin Among the Living Dead* (1973), *Countess Perverse* (1974), *Lorna the Exorcist* (1974). Elsewhere he turned out tangential adaptations of Edgar Wallace, Jules Verne, Octave Mirbeau and Edgar Allan Poe, but the literary source for whom he demonstrated the fiercest passion was the Marquis de Sade: *Eugenie* (1970), *Plaisir à trois* (1973) and *Géminos de placer* (1981) embody the libertarian spirit if not the precise letter of Sade's text. Franco's shoddiest films (including forays into hardcore pornography) can often astound with their breathtaking lack of finesse; his signature works, however, occupy a liminal terrain between exploitation cinema and the avant garde, playing with time and space, the porous structure of dream and nightmare, indeed the nature of reality itself. A voracious cineaste, an aesthete working with little or no money at the fringes of commercial genre cinema, he pursued a boundless love of film, on his own recalcitrant terms, to the very end. **S**

JUAN JOSE BIGAS LUNA (1946-2013)

The Spanish director pushed boundaries and helped launch the careers of Penélope Cruz and Javier Bardem

By Paul Julian Smith

Juan José Bigas Luna, who died on 6 April at the age of 67, was best known as the filmmaker of Iberian passion. Obsessed with eroticism and gastronomy, he was described in one Spanish obituary as "a being of pleasure". In his 16 features he sought generously to share that hedonism with his audience.

Having trained as a graphic artist, he began his movie career immediately after the death of dictator Francisco Franco. An early provocation was *Bilbao* (1978), a torrid tale of a man obsessed with a prostitute, which boasted a notorious scene of genital shaving. *Anguish* (1987) was a curiosity: an English-language project in which members of the audience are terrorised in the cinema where they're watching a horror movie. *The Ages of Lulu* (1990), a huge hit in Spain, recounted the erotic odyssey of a young woman, culminating in S&M and drawing allegations of sexism.

But it was with his next films that he hit his



Complicity: Bigas Luna on the set of 'Golden Balls'

stride, attracting an international audience. *Jamón, Jamón* (1992) was the first of Luna's Iberian trilogy, introducing Penélope Cruz as the young (very young) lover of über-macho Javier Bardem, who compares the

taste of her breasts to the most typical of Spanish foods. *Golden Balls* (1993) charted the continuing career of Bardem's strutting stud, as he attempts to erect the tallest tower in Marbella and share his bed with as many luscious girls as his dirty money can buy. *The Tit and the Moon* (1994), set for once in Luna's native Catalonia, was both a ferocious satire of Catalan nationalism and a queasily Oedipal account of heterosexual development: the young hero, ousted from maternal favour by his new brother, transfers his affections to the breasts of a French woman who (in his fantasy at least) freely offers him her milk. While none of Luna's subsequent films had the same impact as the trilogy, *The Chambermaid on the Titanic* (1997) and *Volavérent* (1999) were handsomely mounted period pictures.

One Spanish producer wrote that Luna was a "creator of complicities". While not everyone could share Luna's libidinal preferences, he surely came, in new and uncertain times, not to praise Spanish machismo but to bury it: his films often end with their hero symbolically castrated. A quintessential maverick, Luna will perhaps be best remembered as the discoverer of gifted actors like Cruz and Bardem, who respectfully recalled their debt to him on his death. **S**

DEVELOPMENT TALE

FUNNY GAMES



Stage fright: Edward Hogg, star of 'The Comedian', was subjected to a real-life bout of mockery by the next act after performing his set

Crafting a finished cut from more than 90 hours of footage was just the last hurdle for debut director Tom Shkolnik on *The Comedian*

By Charles Gant

Getting your first movie funded can be challenging at the best of times but when your method is heavily improvisatory, it's harder than ever. No script? That's a large leap of faith for any investor, even at a modest budget. But seven years after Israeli-born Londoner Tom Shkolnik started talking to a major UK filmmaking body about translating the promise of his early shorts into a feature, *The Comedian*—a raw and truthful portrait of London life—is set for release. The journey the director took was anything but easy.

Shkolnik had a lucky break when, via a personal connection, his two short films *Headphones* and *A Picture of Me* found their way to Tony Garnett. The veteran producer (see interview p.62) was about to retire but he introduced Shkolnik to Tessa Ross at Film4, feeling the broadcaster would be a happy home for a DIY filmmaker who had created and assembled his shorts while studying directing at London's Drama Centre. And so it might have proved.

"They really liked the shorts," says Shkolnik,

"and they said, 'We want you to do whatever you want to do.' And then I told them what I wanted to do; they didn't want to do it." Shkolnik's original idea involved a man, burdened by debt, who was losing his business. "I think they were very keen on me making a young, gritty, urban, funky film. I wanted to make a film without a script, and I kept coming to them with ideas about middle-aged men going through life crises. They didn't really know what to do with me."

Eventually Film4 had the bright idea of teaming Shkolnik up with producer Ruth Kenley-Letts and although nothing concrete resulted, she finally found the missing piece of the puzzle when she introduced him to Paris and London-based producer Bertrand Faivre, with whom she had made the 2005 genre picture *Isolation*.

Shkolnik does his best impression of the Frenchman: "First of all, bravo, fantastic shorts. OK, what's happening?" Shkolnik told him the sorry tale. "He said, 'Fine, if that's the way you made your short films as good as they are, that's the way we'll make your first feature: with no script.' And I just sat there and cried. It was such a relief, after three or four years... I think he liked the challenge, in his adventurous way: 'Everyone is frightened of this. I'm going to be the one that does it.'"

Faivre had committed to fund the feature on his own, if necessary, but Shkolnik didn't yet know the story he wanted to make.

Meanwhile the director found another important collaborator in producer Dan McCulloch, with whom he made another short, *One Happy Moment*. Then inspiration struck. "I knew I wanted to do this thing about a stand-up comedian drifting through London, inspired by my friend Will, who worked in a call centre and told me all these very funny stories about life as a young gay man in London," he says. "I started writing this thing: bits of him that stayed in my head, my fantasies about what it would be like to be a stand-up, which is something I'd always dreamed of doing." Faivre and McCulloch agreed to produce the feature together.

While most Hollywood movies start with a two-minute pitch, are fleshed out into a treatment, and then go through several drafts of full screenplay, *The Comedian* travelled in the opposite direction. "It was funny in a way," says Shkolnik. "The original thing I wrote was 180 pages of prose. And then I threw that away, and I wrote 14 pages, and then four pages, and finally one page. It was trying to get rid of everything."

A famous dictum says that a film is made three times—envisioned afresh with the script, the shoot and the edit—and never more so than in the case of *The Comedian*. Shkolnik had devised a Dogme-like set of rules, the most severe being: "Only one take is allowed, shot by two cameras at most" and "We must not know what will happen next in the

story, and invent the film day by day.” The director had the budget for 24 days of shooting but couldn’t be sure of the destination or even the journey – only his main characters: Ed (Edward Hogg), an aspiring stand-up comedian who works in a call centre; Nathan (Nathan Stewart-Jarrett), a young artist who becomes Ed’s boyfriend; and Elisa (Elisa Lasowski), a singer who also has feelings for Ed.

In the shooting, the film departed from the original concept after one particularly bruising stand-up performance by Hogg, who is then subjected – for real – to withering mockery by the next act. “You plant seeds and you water them, and you see what grows,” Shkolnik explains. “Everything grew, but not always to the height that I expected. Certain things rose more, and certain things didn’t, but it was clear something was going on very powerfully in that love triangle and it was clear that something was happening in the stand-up that was very real and very painful and very frightening for all of us. It was frightening to shoot, and frightening to act. When he’s sitting backstage and they are laughing at him, it was real.”

With 90 hours of footage – all original material, no repeated takes – the film continued its development journey throughout the long edit. Originally, Shkolnik worked in London alongside editor Pierre Haberer. But after two months, when the various stakeholders – including sales agent Celluloid Dreams, UK distributor Trinity and the

It was frightening to shoot, and frightening to act. When Ed is sitting backstage and they are laughing at him, it was real

BFI, which much to the relief of Faivre had come in two days before the shoot with 50 per cent of the budget – demanded to see some edited footage, the pair had only six minutes to show them.

Faivre now put his foot down. As Shkolnik recalls, “Bertrand took me aside and said, ‘You need to let Pierre work. You have to get out of the room. Whatever you’re doing, it’s not working.’” The editor decamped to Paris with the footage, slowly discovering what he terms “the first wildlife documentary about human relations”. Adds Shkolnik, “About six months into it, there was a point where you could say, ‘OK, we’ve written the film.’ And then there was another two months of editing. There was six months of: ‘What is it, where are we going, what remains from what I’d dreamed?’ And then it was shaping, tweaking, the rhythms.”

The screenplay is the usual point where producers and investors get to have their primary input. In this instance, with no script, all the feedback came in the edit. “They were all very helpful,” says Shkolnik. “There were some rows, but mostly they were very positive about how to move it forwards. It’s a contradiction. On the one hand, I wanted to make a living organism of a film. On the other, I wanted it to be exactly how I’d envisioned. You have to accept that things had shifted.”

i ‘The Comedian’ is released in the UK on 31 May, and is reviewed on page 82

THE NUMBERS PAPADOPOULOS & SONS



Driving force: Stephen Dillane, right, and Georges Corraface in ‘Papadopoulos & Sons’

By Charles Gant

Marcus Markou was already aged 27 when he began studying acting. Then, increasingly busy running a successful web-based business, he started channelling his creative energies into playwriting. At the age of 39 he went to film school, part time. All these experiences came into play when he decided to write, direct, produce and ultimately distribute his debut feature ‘Papadopoulos & Sons’.

Flying in the face of conventional wisdom about never risking your own money and always leaving the tricky tasks of marketing and distribution to seasoned professionals, Markou has delivered the surprise niche hit of the year. Seemingly out of nowhere, this riches-to-rags tale of an Anglo-Greek Cypriot tycoon (Stephen Dillane) returning to his fish-and-chip shop roots has triumphantly connected with its target audience.

“No one wanted this film,” recounts Markou. “We invited every British distributor and sales agent to see it. Most people didn’t come. Some came and walked out after ten minutes. It’s a pretty soul-destroying experience, but I’m not bitter about it, because that’s just the way the industry is. Even if it’s a lovely feelgood film, even if it delivers on an emotional level, the question remains: how do you sell it? What’s the market?”

With no offers, Markou turned to industry veteran Martin Myers, whose company Miracle regularly books films into cinemas on behalf of independent producers. Cineworld had a track record exhibiting Bollywood and Polish films,

and might be persuadable. “So I put together a five-page marketing plan [explaining] how I was going to reach the Greek community,” says Markou. “I looked at where every single Greek Orthodox church was in Britain, and built a map. Where there’s a church, there’s a community.”

Conventional media channels included London Greek radio and Greek newspapers, but Markou also scored big on social media, creating a network of ambassadors on Facebook and Twitter. Crucially, he was able to use the resource of his business, which owns website platforms for trading small businesses and commercial property. “My brother and I employ 40 people,” he explains. “The poster was designed by one of our designers. The website was built by one of our web engineers.”

Debuting with more than £60,000 in its first week from just 13 Cineworld sites, the film has now grossed an impressive £82,000, and has sold to the BBC for five transmissions. In June it will go out on 150 screens in Germany, and talks are ongoing for Australia and New Zealand.

For Markou, it’s been an all-consuming project, and he’s lucky to have had the support and co-investment of his brother Andrew, an executive producer on the film. But while recognising his privileged status, he hopes ‘Papadopoulos’ will prove an inspiration: “Because of emerging technology, social-media networks, our connectivity and our ability to find niche markets, I feel more people like me will be able to write, direct, finance and distribute their own films. It’s really a very exciting time for indie filmmakers.”

SELF-DISTRIBUTED UK HITS

Film	Year	Gross
Asoka	2001	£577,824
The Wee Man	2013	£400,950
Scenes of a Sexual Nature	2006	£91,698
Papadopoulos & Sons	2013	£81,943*
The Mystic Masseur	2001	£42,235

All films booked into cinemas by Miracle. *Gross after 17 days

BREWSTER

BFI FILM FUND INSIGHTS



Coming our way: Scarlett Johansson in Jonathan Glazer's long-awaited 'Under the Skin'

The first instalment of a new column from the director of the BFI Film Fund considers the state of the British industry



By Ben Roberts

As I write, we at the BFI Film Fund have just learned this year's Official Selection for Cannes and – as we've known for a

while – there are no British films on the list. At last year's Cannes, Ken Loach sat astride the Competition with *The Angel's Share*; Ben Wheatley thrived in Directors' Fortnight with *Sightseers*; and Rufus Norris debuted with *Broken in Critics' Week*. Loach went on to have his most successful film at the box office for some time, *Sightseers* won several awards, and *Broken* won Best British Film at the BIFAs in December. Relatively speaking, with such a strong year for mainstream British film, we were in business.

So is this year a disappointment? I don't think so. Clio Barnard's *The Selfish Giant* and Ruairi Robinson's *Last Days on Mars* will play in Directors' Fortnight, and Paul Wright's *For Those in Peril* will debut in Critics' Week. That's three distinctive debut features, each from a striking and personal 'voice'. (For the record, Robinson is Irish; his producers Michael Kuhn and Andrea Cornwell are British). For the many Brit filmmakers with films that haven't made the Cannes list, the autumn festivals are mere months away.

Yet within moments of the Cannes announcement, the UK press was checking the vital signs of the British industry, expressing concern that we are not developing filmmakers able to compete on the world stage, that we are too

Within moments of the Cannes Official Selection announcement the UK press was checking the vital signs of the British industry

focused on the US, yet not that commercial either.

Do I agree? Of course not. I know there are more remarkable, original films to come this year because I've seen them in their early stages, and we at the Film Fund feel positive that a new generation of filmmakers is coming through. And I'm looking forward to Jonathan Glazer revealing his extraordinary *Under the Skin*, whose every iteration is more unsettling than the last.

But this year's 'Brits in Cannes' fuss does highlight a more forensic discourse about the health of our industry, the quality of our filmmakers and the value and purpose of public support. The impact of the decisions we make and the values that we, as a public body, should uphold have been constantly on my mind. How do we fulfil a role at the heart of this industry while pursuing creative excellence and embracing the occasional failure that can follow from audacious choices? How do we stimulate industry with a (relatively) small amount of money?

In the ten months I've been director of the Film Fund, my team and I have heard the broadest range of opinion as to how approximately £25 million a year should be invested in UK film. There are the usual complaints: that it's a closed shop, a boys' club, an elite not interested in audiences, backing the same-old, same-olds. Why not more family films, films for older audiences, films that people actually want to see...?

The Film Fund is and should be open and inclusive, available to all our best filmmakers. But we can't do it all. The fund receives more than 300 applications a year for production funding so we have to say no far more often than we say yes.

My instinct is that we must go all out for excellence; regardless of genre, we must put our energy behind emerging voices of distinction. I want us to be culturally disruptive at times and brave the criticism, and I'm confident audiences will follow. We are setting a target of backing first, second or third-time filmmakers with as much as 75 per cent of our funds, supporting new talent while they establish themselves.

Breadth, quality, fresh air – those are the principles that we will stick to. Let me know if we deviate. ☺

IN PRODUCTION

● **David Cronenberg** has announced the production of his new film 'Maps to the Stars', which will star Julianne Moore, John Cusack and Robert Pattinson. An attack on celebrity-obsessed Los Angeles, the film is produced by Martin Katz, who previously collaborated with Cronenberg on 'Spider' and 'Cosmopolis'.

● **David O. Russell**'s latest film has been given a new title, 'American Hustle', and has begun shooting in Boston. About 1970s con artists and starring Amy Adams and Jennifer Lawrence, it's slated for a December release. Russell is also at work on the script for the recently rekindled 'Pride and Prejudice and Zombies'.

● **Asif Kapadia** is to follow 'Senna' with another documentary project – this time about the life and tragically early death of Amy Winehouse, again built from archive footage.

● **Olivier Assayas** is already at work on his next film 'Sils Maria', which the French filmmaker has reportedly written especially for Juliette Binoche. In the French/German co-production, Binoche will play an actress who becomes obsessed with a younger actress who is cast in the role that originally made Binoche's character famous. Chloë Moretz is reportedly playing the younger woman, with Mia Wasikowska slated to star as Binoche's assistant.

● **Nuri Bilge Ceylan** is to follow the unanimously praised 'Once upon a Time in Anatolia' with a project entitled 'Sommeil d'hiver', a story about a retired actor and his young wife, set on the snow-covered Turkish steppe.

● **Noah Baumbach** is to follow his upcoming, New York-set, Greta Gerwig-starring 'Frances Ha', with another New York-set, Greta Gerwig-starring film, at this stage known only as 'Untitled Public School Project'. The plot reportedly follows Gerwig as a "dauntless NY striver". Lola Kirke, the sister of 'Girls' star Jemima Kirke, will play an undergraduate who aspires to be just like Gerwig's character. Baumbach has compared it to both 'The Great Gatsby' and Jonathan Demme's 'Something Wild'.

● **Ang Lee**, below, is one of several directors to have announced forays into the small screen recently. Lee is developing a pilot for HBO entitled 'Tyrant', while both Martin Scorsese and the Coen brothers are reportedly working on spin-offs of their own films 'Gangs of New York' and ' Fargo', respectively.



PETER AALBÆK JENSEN

Once a roadie, now the head of Denmark's Zentropa, the producer has enjoyed a 20-year partnership with Lars von Trier

By Geoffrey Macnab

"It's because we come from a shitty little country. We could never afford a film beyond €3 million." Thus Danish producer (and co-founder of Zentropa) Peter Aalbæk Jensen explains why his partner Lars von Trier makes big international co-productions. Von Trier's recent films (including his new project, *Nymphomaniac*) have been shot in Sweden or Germany, where there are generous regional film funds to support them. It is one of the ironies about the most famous Danish director of his era that he now rarely works in Denmark.

The economic reasons for heading abroad are obvious: there are limited amounts of money available from Danish public-funding bodies and broadcasters; the local audience isn't huge either. By working with international partners on English-language films, he can both access investment and extend the reach of his work. This is all a change from the late 1990s, when von Trier was at the forefront of the Dogme Movement with its "Vow of Chastity" and fervent embrace of a low-budget aesthetic. "[Dogme] established our whole company," Jensen says. He points out that some of the Dogme films were very popular indeed: Lone Scherfig's *Italian for Beginners* (2000) sold a million tickets in Germany alone.

The collaboration between von Trier and Jensen stretches back to the early 1990s. Jensen, a former roadie, has always claimed they came together as outcasts at the nadir of their careers. He was heavily in debt following the failure of his film *Perfect World* (1990). Von Trier's stock was equally low after the commercial misfire of *Epidemic* (1987). Nonetheless they managed to make the hugely ambitious *Europa* (1991), which had 27 different financing partners, and went on to co-found Zentropa in 1992. Jensen no longer produces von Trier's films; today, his role is that of executive producer, but his ingenuity has enabled the director to work on an ever bigger scale.

"It's very important to have a strong distinction between the executive producer and the producer," Jensen says of the checks and balances on any film set. "I feel the producer shall always represent the film. Of course, somebody has to represent all the money in the financing plan. The representative of the financiers – that's me. I am there to protect their interests against the producer and the director."

Like Britain's Ken Loach, von Trier tends to work with the same distributors and financiers on all his films. "Both on cheaper and more expensive Lars von Trier projects, we always bring partners on board," Jensen explains. "It has become a family!" The films have rarely been outright box-office successes. Nonetheless, distributors remain eager to support von Trier. He is one of the few European directors whose work is always pre-sold to buyers around the world. Jensen is expert at creating a hype and "mythology" around von Trier.



Great Danes: Peter Aalbæk Jensen, right, with frequent collaborator Lars von Trier

"Maybe also that's what trapped him in Cannes," Jensen speculates about the scandal in 2011 when von Trier made controversial remarks about Hitler and the Nazis during a press conference at the festival. "He always feels he needs to deliver some kind of cooperative quotes. He has been more or less expected to perform some kind of entertainment." Now, Jensen suggests, von Trier is taking his inspiration from Terrence Malick and not giving any interviews at all. "He's silent now. It came as a surprise for him that it was possible for Terrence Malick to be in Cannes without giving any interviews. This made it easier for him to keep quiet."

The Cannes scandal notwithstanding, actors continue to relish working with von Trier: Charlotte Gainsbourg, Shia LaBeouf, Uma Thurman, Jamie Bell and Christian Slater are all appearing in *Nymphomaniac*. Jensen won't reveal what deals the big international names are offered but they are clearly paid a fraction of their usual fees. "It's because of Lars – they seem to think it is fun to work with him!"

Von Trier and Jensen are far more pragmatic than their reputations might suggest. On *Breaking the Waves* (1996) they originally planned to shoot in Holland but couldn't get the money and so re-set the story in the north of Scotland. They made *The Kingdom* (1994) for television because they were "broke" and needed something that could generate a quick turnover and help them launch *Breaking the Waves*. More self-absorbed filmmakers might have complained about the decision of US distributors Magnolia to release *Melancholia* on video on demand (VOD) a month before it was seen in cinemas. After all, this was an arthouse epic, not straight-to-video genre fare. "It was fantastic," Jensen enthuses about

A female audience, who we normally scare away if we have too much kinky sex – I think they will love 'Nymphomaniac'

Magnolia's strategy, which extended von Trier's reach beyond handfuls of von Trier aficionados in university towns. "We had an audience that we have not reached before... we could address all of America and so we were very pleased about that."

Nymphomaniac will be shown as two features and there is also likely to be a longer VOD version. This is "the wild and poetic story of a woman's erotic journey from birth to the age of 50, as told by the main character, the self-diagnosed nymphomaniac Joe [Charlotte Gainsbourg]." As its one-line pitch makes clear, it is a risky endeavour. Von Trier, the ageing enfant terrible, could easily end up being accused of sexism and voyeurism. Jensen, trying to sell the film, admits he is worried it may be too extreme – or not extreme enough: "We need an edge to the project. We have to be very close to the borderline, whatever it is." He adds that the "sex element" is the least interesting aspect to *Nymphomaniac*. "It's much more fun than expected. A female audience, who we normally scare away if we have too much kinky sex – I think they will love this film because we are dealing with a complete heroine. It's a woman stronger than everybody around her."

In 2015 Jensen will step down as CEO of Zentropa (now co-owned by Scandinavian major Nordisk). He aims to return to producing, working with young directors. A colourful and sometimes controversial figure in his 20 years at Zentropa, Jensen helped revolutionise co-production in Europe. On any given von Trier film there is likely to be French, German and Swedish involvement. There may also be support from Eurimages (the Council of Europe's Film Fund.) Despite so many partners, the creative integrity remains (and no one talks about Europuddings.) "It's seen as a long-term relationship between professional European companies," he says of von Trier's regular backers. "Without sounding too optimistic, if the film business can be trained to work together in 20 years in Europe, maybe other businesses also could do it." 

 A Lars von Trier season runs until 31 May at BFI Southbank, London

thebigpicture magazine

Exploring Film Beyond the Borders of the Screen...



The Big Picture is a magazine that explores film in a wider context using the power of imagery to show just how moving moving-pictures can be.

From posters and evocative objects to photo essays and real-life stories beyond the borders of the screen, **The Big Picture** offers a unique perspective on the world of film.

Find out more by visiting
www.thebigpicturemagazine.com

Also download the App today to enjoy an archive of all past and present issues



FREE APP

Experience The Bigger Picture

Showing that there's more to film than just film...



Screengems

Evocative Objects Onscreen

Reel World

Film Beyond the Borders of the Screen

Parting Shot

Imitation is the Sincerest Form of Flattery

On Location

The Places That Make the Movies

Spotlight

Cinema's Thematic Strands

1000 Words

Moments That Changed Cinema Forever

Widescreen

Film in A Wider Context

Architecture & Film

Adventures in Filmed Environments

Print copies available from www.magcloud.com



and to view from www.scribd.com



PDF Downloads of all past issues of The Big Picture are available from **www.thebigpicturemagazine.com**
The Big Picture Magazine is produced by Intellect. www.intellectbooks.com / info@intellectbooks.com

ISTANBUL

LET BATTLE COMMENCE



Law and disorder: a protest march against the demolition of the Emek cinema was met by police with barricades, tear-gas and water cannon

When developers attempted to demolish Turkey's oldest cinema, which opened in 1924, it prompted a groundswell of popular protest

By Kaya Genç

For many of Turkey's cinephiles today there are three things that embody the art of cinema more than anything else. One is the Istanbul Film Festival, held in the second week of April every year, which brings a fresh crop of art films to the city and tempts thousands of us into taking a two-week leave from our office jobs. The second, Emek, is the oldest cinema in Turkey, and once the centre of the festival where, in front of its tiny box office, we competed to buy tickets for the latest Haneke or Kiarostami. But that was before the cinema closed its doors in 2009, when Kamer Insaat, the company that had rented out Emek for 25 years, decided to demolish the building. The firm's architects said they would transport the original interior to a new building, planned to house ten separate film theatres, where it would be faithfully restored.

Not everyone was convinced. When the plans were first announced the doyen of Turkish film critics, Atilla Dorsay – the third component of the cinephiles' holy trinity – was among the first to voice his suspicions. His reluctance to agree with the new design quickly turned to anger, as relations between the cinema's supporters and representatives of the company turned increasingly antagonistic. The former accused Kamer Insaat of destroying Istanbul's heritage, while the latter claimed opponents were trying to conserve an extremely old – and unusable – building. At the beginning of December 2011, in a rather cavalier move, Dorsay wrote in his

newspaper column that he would quit his job as a film critic if the plans were implemented and Emek was indeed demolished.

Then there was silence. The doors of the cinema were tightly shut. Although the building is located on one of Istanbul's most crowded streets, people seemed almost to have forgotten about it. Until a few days before this year's film festival, that is, when construction workers appeared around the building. That same week curious activists managed to get inside and smuggled out video footage of the interior; there was no concealing the fact that Emek's demolition had officially begun.

During a break between screenings, Dorsay decided he had to see what was going on inside the cinema with his own eyes. A tall and energetic man in his early seventies, he made his way into the theatre but was stopped by an employee who, he says, threatened to punch him in the face. Had it not been for bystanders who recognised

Turkish cinephiles are willing to risk even the prospect of imprisonment in order to protect what they consider to be sacred



A man of his word: Atilla Dorsay

him, Dorsay might well have received a beating.

The same week that American film critic Roger Ebert passed away, Dorsay proved he was a man of his word by quitting his post at the *Sabah* newspaper where he had been writing for the last decade.

At *Sabah* I worked as editor and fact checker on Dorsay's articles, so I know from experience that he is a highly disciplined writer with lots of things to say about cinema and culture in general. His decision to stop writing must thus have been a difficult, albeit well-calculated one. Apparently he wanted to give cultural ammunition to those who desired to preserve the building in its current condition.

Although Dorsay's stance was praised by columnists, Kamer Insaat's architects said they had no intention of changing their plans: the demolition would go ahead. This led opponents of the proposed new Emek to organise a protest march. The Greek director Costa-Gavras, in Istanbul as a guest of the festival, joined the protestors demanding to enter the street on which Emek is located – the police, too, were prepared for the occasion, having installed barricades on the street. When the protestors attempted marching forward, they were met with tear-gas and water cannon. The film critic Berke Göl, a member of the FIPRESCI jury at the festival, was carted off to the police station alongside three other protestors.

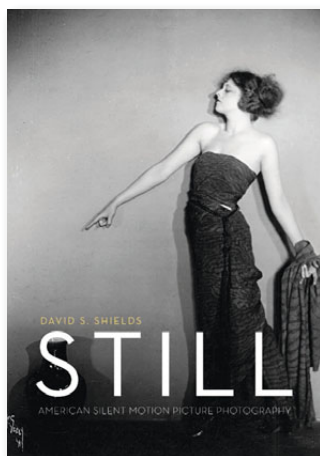
In one sense, this is an ongoing debate about Istanbul's future – about whether the city should allow ambitious new projects to radically alter its historic neighbourhoods. It also reflects the extremely special and sensitive role film culture plays in the lives of Turkish cinephiles, who are willing to risk even the prospect of imprisonment in order to protect what they consider to be sacred and indispensable. ☹

Reader offers

COMPETITIONS

STILL: FIVE COPIES OF PHOTOGRAPH BOOK ON SILENT FILM STARS TO BE WON

Exploring the work of over 60 photographers, David S. Shields's *Still* (published by the University of Chicago Press) rediscovers the stories of camera artists who descended on early Hollywood and the stars who sat for them. Focusing on the performer portrait and the scene still, Shields details how the work of photographers such as Albert Witzel and W.F. Seely changed the Hollywood film industry. Over 150 stunning images are also reproduced in the book. We have five copies to give away.



To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

Q. The camera manufacturer Leica is based in which European country?

- a. Poland
- b. France
- c. Germany

EALING STUDIOS: THREE COLLECTIONS TO BE WON

Network Distributing brings out its second and third volumes of the Ealing Studios Rarities Collection this May and June. As with volume 1 the latest two each feature four films from the vaults of Ealing Studios and Associated Talking Pictures in a double-disc set, presented as new transfers in their original aspect ratios. The films include Carol Reed's *Midshipman Easy*, Basil Dearden's *Cage of Gold* and Edmond

T. Gréville's *Brief Ecstasy*. We have three sets of all volumes to give away.

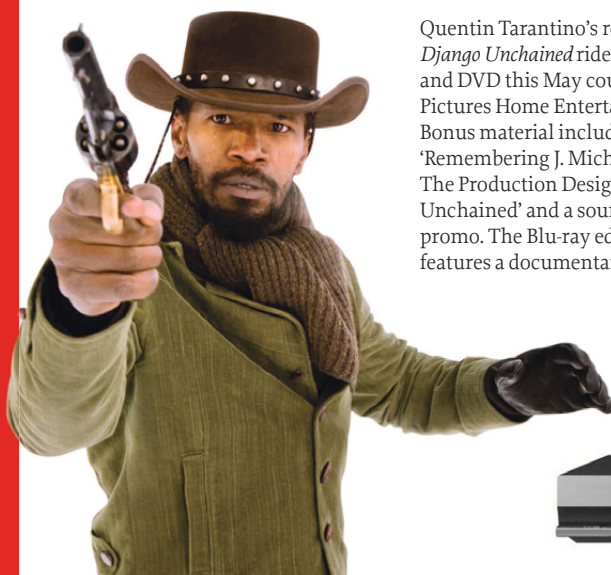
To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

Q. Which of these Ealing films was based on a novel by Edgar Wallace?

- a. Cage of Gold
- b. Brief Ecstasy
- c. The Four Just Men



WIN: BLU-RAY PLAYER PLUS 'DJANGO UNCHAINED'



Quentin Tarantino's revenge tale *Django Unchained* rides in on Blu-ray and DVD this May courtesy of Sony Pictures Home Entertainment. Bonus material includes 'Remembering J. Michael Riva: The Production Design of *Django Unchained*' and a soundtrack promo. The Blu-ray edition also features a documentary on the

horses and stunts in the film. We are delighted to offer a Blu-ray player as a top prize with the film plus runner-up Blu-rays and DVDs.

To be in with a chance of winning simply answer the following question and also state your edition preference:

Q. Which role does Franco Nero play in 'Django Unchained'?

- a. Ace Speck
- b. Old Man Carrucan
- c. Amerigo Vescepi



HOW TO ENTER

Email your answer, name and address, putting either 'Django Unchained competition', 'Ealing Studios Rarities competition' or 'Still book competition' in the subject heading, to s&scompetition@bfi.org.uk Or send a postcard with your answer to either 'Django Unchained competition', 'Ealing Studios Rarities competition', or 'Still book competition' at Sight & Sound, BFI, 21 Stephen Street, London W1T 1LN

The deadline for all competitions is Tuesday 18 June 2013

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- * The prizewinners of all competitions will be picked at random and notified within ten days of the closing date.
- * Employees of the BFI or companies related to the competition are ineligible to enter.
- * Prizes cannot be exchanged for cash.
- * The BFI may wish to contact you to keep you informed of future events. Please indicate on your email/postcard if you do not wish to hear from the BFI regarding any other BFI promotions or news.

PREVIOUS WINNERS

April issue winners:
'Sightseers' + other British films on DVD – Brian Cheney, Dorian Davies, Terry Foster, Cheryl-Lynne Mansell, Peter Musgrave.
Director series of books – Martyn Cook, Patrick Davis.
Kristin Scott Thomas films – Jane Clark, John Heffernan, Melissa Peakman.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

THERE ARE THREE WAYS TO GET YOUR ESSENTIAL INTERNATIONAL FILM MAGAZINE

1

12-MONTH PRINT SUBSCRIPTION + FREE DIGITAL EDITION £45 (UK), £68 (ROW)

- UK subscribers save £9 on the cover-price – that's two issues free!
- All print subscriptions come with a FREE digital edition, plus a two-year digital archive of back issues!*
- UK subscribers who pay by direct debit will receive one of these BFI dual-format DVD/Blu-rays:



2

DIGITAL-ONLY SUBSCRIPTION: £30 (GLOBAL PRICE FOR 12 MONTHS)

- The most cost-effective way to read *Sight & Sound*.
- Available on PC/Mac, iPad and selected Android devices.
- Includes a two-year digital archive of back issues.
- Features: interactive pages, video content, text search, clippings and bookmarks.



3

THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE: SIGHT & SOUND AND THE MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

- The 80-year archive of both titles digitised – available on PC/Mac!
- Available to subscribers only – an additional £20 for 12 months' access.*
- Features: full text search, clippings, bookmarks and high-quality print options.



FOR MORE INFORMATION & TO SUBSCRIBE:

Visit: www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/subscribe or call our subscription hotline: +44 (0) 20 8955 7070

FAQs and demo for the digital edition and digital archive available to view via: sightandsounddigital.bfi.org.uk

Existing subscribers: register your email address to receive your FREE digital edition. (Visit bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/subscribe and follow the links)

*Please note: access to the digital edition and archive is limited to individual paid subscribers. Institutional/library subscriptions are unavailable. Existing UK subscribers who wish to renew their subscription and take advantage of the direct-debit offer can do so by renewing today – simply call our subscription department with your details. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

BACK ISSUES & BINDERS

'Sight & Sound' back issues are available going back to 1995, priced at £5.50 (UK) and £6.50 (ROW). Check issue contents at: www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound

'Sight & Sound' binders are priced at £8.25 (UK), £9.99 (Europe) and £12.50 (ROW).

Order by calling +44 (0) 20 8955 7070

Cheques should be made payable to 'BFI' and sent to: Sight & Sound Binders/Back Issues, PO Box 2068, Bournehall House, Bournehall Road, Bushey WD23 3ZF



BETWEEN THE LINES

After his successful sojourn in television with the 'The Borgias', Neil Jordan explains how he was drawn back to film by 'Byzantium', a contemporary vampire story that revisits some of the director's characteristic themes and breathes new life into an overexposed genre

By Trevor Johnston

He needs a new knee, apparently. Which explains why Neil Jordan is effectively housebound on a sleety March morning that's turned the Irish Sea outside his window from its habitual snot-green to a deep gun-metal. He's got his left leg propped on a coffee table and is massaging it to ease a torn tendon that will require an operation some time soon. A convenient metaphor for the struggling independent filmmaker in an era of economic uncertainty and cultural philistinism? Not a bit of it, as it turns out.

"It's great, in a way," says Jordan, his soft accent offset by the crackle of a roaring log fire. "Pretty much all I can do at the moment is sit and write. So that's what I've been doing. Never been busier."

The occasion for the interview is the upcoming release of *Byzantium*, a modern-day vampire tale with a mother-and-daughter twist, which he shot in Ireland and Britain last year with long-standing producer (and former Palace Pictures cohort) Stephen Woolley. It marks a return to the genre-inflected personal movies crafted on modest resources with which Jordan, the award-winning Irish novelist-turned-celluloid auteur, first made his name in the decade from 1982's *Angel* to 1992's *The Crying Game*. This spring, however, the Showtime cable network in the US will also be screening the third series of his historical epic *The Borgias* in ten hour-long instalments, before it makes its way onto DVD. A literate yet hugely entertaining cavalcade of Machiavellian plotting, papal misbehaviour and staggering moral hypocrisy set in 15th-century Italy, it's a striking indication

ROOM WITH A VIEW
Clara (Gemma Arterton, right) takes the air at the eponymous seaside hotel in 'Byzantium', directed by Neil Jordan, above





GETTY IMAGES (2)



DAUGHTERS OF DARKNESS Clara (Gemma Arterton, left) is a full-on, unrepentant vampire while her companion Eleanor (Saoirse Ronan, right) has more compassion



of how far Jordan – and indeed the industry – has travelled from those British and Irish indie roots.

Between those two points, he's pulled off a remarkable feat for a filmmaker from these islands, carving out a career that has criss-crossed the Atlantic and the Irish Sea. The 17 features he's delivered in his 63 years embrace arthouse and mainstream, but always with a strong personal imprint. With a filmmaking journey that's taken him from the early days of Film4 to Palace Pictures, British Screen, intermittent Hollywood studio assignments, the UK Film Council, the Irish Film Board and the BFI Film Fund, he's become accidentally emblematic of the history of the British industry since its modest early-1980s regeneration – a history of ambition, retrenchment and enduring enterprise.

Today, though, I've dragged him away from his writing desk upstairs in the family's Georgian terraced house just south of Dublin, where he's spent the earlier part of the morning tapping away on the script for a *Borgias* cable movie, conceived as a one-off two-hour culmination of the expansive, blood-soaked saga. "I'm not sure the story really has the appetite for another series," he explains, "so this seemed the best way to bring it to a conclusion. Funnily enough I've found myself back where I was when I wrote *The Borgias* as a film script for DreamWorks eight years ago. We could never get it financed so I fell into doing it as a cable series, which I never imagined myself doing. Now I'm looking back over the original screenplay and thinking, 'I can use this bit, maybe this bit.' It just goes to show: you have to keep going and take advantage of whatever opportunities come your way."

Byzantium, it's fair to say, also falls into the opportunity category. As Jordan himself readily acknowledges, it comes across like a compendium of his favourite motifs. The way Saoirse Ronan's centuries-old teenager narrates her life story is definitely a favoured Jordan approach, for instance, offering reminders of his Anne Rice adaptation *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), his take on Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair* (1999) and even his version of Patrick McCabe's cross-dressing Troubles saga *Breakfast on Pluto* (2005). The new film's down-at-heel seaside setting also pitched up in key earlier Jordan works like his much-admired romantic crime thriller *Mona Lisa* (1986), 1990's Irish-set rites-of-passage vignette *The Miracle* (one of his least-seen yet most characteristic films) and even the scene-setting opening of *The Crying Game*. Moreover, since the 19th-century Gothic origins of the undead central characters (a viciously assertive Gemma Arterton plays protective mother to the troubled Ronan)



account for their actions in the 21st century, the crucial interweaving of past and present also recalls the defining structural strategy in Jordan's two most recent novels, the ghostly memory piece *Shade* (2004) and the tantalising doppelgänger tale *Mistaken* (2011). With such myriad textual connections, the major surprise is that Jordan didn't actually write *Byzantium*, which is scripted by Moira Buffini (*Tamara Drewe*, the 2011 *Jane Eyre*) from her play for young people *A Vampire Story*, premiered in the National Theatre Connections season of 2008.

"Everything attracted me to it except the fact it was about vampires," reflects Jordan. Since the production schedule for *The Borgias* over the past three years has involved significant time spent at the Korda studios in Budapest, making it tricky to fit in new projects, the deal was that he wouldn't do any more writing on the *Byzantium* script; instead he would simply guide development with Buffini. But after a shrinking budget ruled out planned Morocco sequences explaining the exotic origins of the vampire curse, it was Jordan who brought in the story's most original aspect: an Irish angle where a startling conflation of redemptive Christian imagery and pagan folklore courses from a remote island spring flowing with blood. "If you look into various cultures, they all have their own mythology of the revenant. In Ireland they're called *neamh-mairbh*, or walking dead. So the idea that we could come up with a different creation myth made it worth attacking the idea, even in the midst of the current vampire madness on our screens," Jordan says.

"In a way these are female versions of Lestat and Louis," he adds, referring to the characters played by Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt in his biggest studio movie to date, *Interview with the Vampire*. "Gemma's character is an irridentist like Lestat and she has this very voluptuous relationship to sex, whereas Saoirse plays someone who's full of guilt, like Louis trying to hold on to his last vestige of humanity. But there's also a cool feminist fable in here, about women who steal something from the male fraternity of vampires and use it for their own ends. I wouldn't have written these characters – that's why you work with other writers, to take you places you wouldn't reach by yourself."

Although lacking some of the snap and toughness of Jordan's strongest work, *Byzantium*'s a worthwhile addition to the catalogue and undoubtedly shares that prime characteristic in his films where ostensibly sympathetic individuals (here a caring, hard-pressed mum, and an adolescent trying to define her sense of self) do murderously bad things, portrayed in a manner that

leaves moral judgement to the individual viewer. The same definitely goes for Patrick McCabe's incendiary creation in *The Butcher Boy* (filmed by Jordan in 1997): "the incredible Francie Brady", a ginger-haired scamp whose eagerness for a carefree childhood collides with the oppressive environs of provincial early-1960s Ireland. Our sympathy for this thwarted free spirit becomes subject to serious scrutiny when his actions morph from forgivable excess into disturbing psychosis. A similar case is Jodie Foster's urban avenger in Jordan's 2007 film *The Brave One*, whose desire to strike out after the vicious mugging that killed her partner brings the troubling satisfactions of deadly payback but also a seemingly inexorable slide into moral oblivion, thus testing our own complicity in her ominous personal trajectory. Warner Bros were ready to pay for Jordan to shoot a more comfortably conventional resolution of that film, but he resisted. "The stories where the audience have to adjust their perspective are the ones I'm drawn to," he insists. "For me, it's always about a situation or characters which bring your emotions to a place that's irrational – where you question your sense of what's right and wrong."

FROM A SEA OF TROUBLES

Jordan found his thematic feet early on. In 1982 his first feature, *Angel*, was also predicated on those very same moments of dizzying consternation, played out against the protection-racket subculture of Ulster border country during the Troubles. It's the done thing, the expected thing, to cry for the senseless loss of a mute innocent as terrorist gunmen open fire, but the response of jobbing saxophonist Danny (Jordan's signature actor Stephen Rea), an anguished witness to the shooting, is something else again. When he subsequently takes out the perpetrator, the fatal event is so sudden, easy and definitive, it leaves the viewer literally gasping for air.

Long since reckoned one of the great debuts, *Angel* met with a fractious response at home; indeed, Jordan's always provocative screen treatment of Ireland's ongoing turbulent history has proved another connecting tissue in his output. "Chris Menges, the cameraman, came from an idea of socially engaged cinema and wanted me to have riots in the streets and the oppressive forces of imperialism," Jordan recalls. "But I wanted [*Angel*] to be about the stripped-down existential fact of doing away with another person. That caused a lot of trouble in terms of the political dialogue which was going on in Ireland at the time. No one wanted to see that."

Often regarded as something of a prickly interview, Jordan in person certainly has a bone-dry Irish humour, while his amusing cameo as a dauntingly stern film director at the start of Ian Fitzgibbon's Dylan Moran comedy *A Film with Me in It* (2008) shows that he can smile at his reputation. And if he seems to relish pointing up those past moments where he's felt hard done by, it's often with a sort of wry bemusement at the reactions he's encountered. "Look at a film five years after it came out and suddenly it's a different animal," he muses.

One case in point is, of course, *The Crying Game*. Not everyone remembers now that, before it wowed the US as 'the film with a secret' and won Jordan an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay, its UK release was a real damp squib since some critics (notably Alexander Walker in the *Evening Standard*) rankled at the idea of responding



LIFE AND DEATH

Top: Forest Whitaker and Jordan regular Stephen Rea in 'The Crying Game' (1992). Below: Antonio Banderas in 'Interview with the Vampire' (1994), Jordan's biggest commercial success to date

to a protagonist who is an IRA gunman. But it remains the richest of Jordan's originals, as Stephen Rea's restless Fergus winds up in London, undertaking a perturbing emotional odyssey into unfamiliar ethnic and sexual waters – courtesy of Jaye Davidson's Dil – before a final realisation that his humanity encompasses horizons far wider than he'd previously imagined.

"Strange, wasn't it?" Jordan recalls now. "The whole American thing. They could see the other levels in it, the different deceits in the story. The idea was to have a movie which started with the specific political realities of that moment, then take the character into a territory that would question the very basis of those politics. In Britain some of the reviews didn't really get it, but I was convinced there was an audience for that story, because it was as interesting as I could make it. And if that wasn't the case, I wasn't sure I still wanted to be making films."

Coming off three box-office disappointments in a row – ill-advised knockabout comedy in *High Spirits* (1988), the Mamet-scripted religious farce *We're No Angels* (1989) and *The Miracle*, which almost nobody saw – *The Crying Game* proved the pivotal moment in Jordan's career. On the verge of throwing his hands up in despair, he instead went Hollywood, where Tinseltown power-broker David Geffen asked him to bring Anne Rice's cult novel *Interview with the Vampire* to the screen. Jordan rewrote her screenplay and turned in a lavish, disarmingly grim movie, which was true to his conception of the material yet made enough money for Geffen to want to continue the relationship. Jordan came back to the *Michael Collins* script that David Puttnam had commissioned from him after *Angel*, and which had been on the shelf so long that Warners didn't even realise they still owned the rights.

From today's vantage point, the notion that a Hollywood major would finance a film like *Michael Collins* (1996), an abrasive movie about a political terror campaign – and then follow it with a project as insanely inappropriate for the US market as *The Butcher*

I wanted 'Angel' to be about the existential fact of doing away with another person. In terms of the political dialogue in Ireland at the time, that caused a lot of trouble



UNLIMITED MINUTES
Eleanor (Saoirse Ronan),
the centuries-old narrator
of 'Byzantium'

 *Boy* – seems like something from an alternative universe. Jordan shakes his head and smiles as he remembers trying to dissuade Geffen Pictures from taking on *The Butcher Boy* – “The more I said it wasn’t for them, the more they wanted it!” – though his mood darkens when he recollects the criticism over the historical liberties he was accused of taking in *Michael Collins*.

“Some people had a problem with the armoured car opening fire on the crowd in [Dublin’s] Croke Park when it should have been soldiers on foot, but for me that was just a more efficient visual solution,” he says. “It’s just not possible to make a totally historically accurate film for the cinema. I’m sure even Gillo Pontecorvo would admit that *The Battle of Algiers* isn’t completely accurate. The bigger issue was the argument that this was a film about someone who builds up an army through violence, then tries to decommission it and cannot. There was a strong allegory there between the timeframe of the film and the moment we were then actually going through in the Peace Process, where you had Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness and so on beginning to have meetings with regular politicians. I thought that connection was justified.

“There’s a strong tradition in Ireland of anyone who does anything culturally interesting getting a bit of a battering,” he continues, obviously aware of his own status alongside Jim Sheridan in the nation’s filmmaking vanguard. “I guess Sean O’Casey got something of a kicking in his day, so maybe I should take the negative reactions as a back-handed compliment.”

That he uses a literary reference here is instructive since, unlike today, when Jordan started out there was simply no precedent for the path an Irish filmmaker might travel; the career template was only there for Irish writers. “Oh, it was very clear,” he recalls. “You’d publish a book of short stories, get some awards, travel the literary festival circuit and build up your reputation as a man of letters. By the time of *The Past* [1980], my second novel, which is about a photographer, I realised I was obsessed by visual description and maybe the way to explore that was through film. So now the literary world regards me as some sort of dilettante, and the film world sees me as this literary geezer... Well, that’s a pain in the ass.”

Much as he enjoys a good moan, however, Jordan does have a sense of the peculiarity of his oddly bifurcated creativity, which surfaced in his most recent novel *Mistaken*. This chronicles the ongoing intertwined fates of Kevin Thunder, a bristling working-class outsider who eventually becomes a videogame designer in Dublin, and Gerald Spain, posh boy and consummate social climber who builds a career as a second-rate novelist – prompting the possibility that one may be the other’s creation, or perhaps vice versa. “I managed a little trick there,” Jordan points out. “One of them is me, and the other one is me also, even if he works in computer animation rather than making movies.”

If pressed to choose between page and screen, however, Jordan admits he’s really a film man at heart: “There’s just a kind of poetry in cinema you don’t get in fiction. It might seem a crime to say that, but you’ve got colour, movement, suggestibility, you’re just swept away into a territory you didn’t know existed. Take the opening sequence in Jean-Luc Godard’s *Contempt*, where Bardot’s lying there asking Michel Piccoli which bit of her he likes. That scene is about 20 different things, but you also know it’s in there because of some gross commercial demands – the producer wanting Bardot nude – which Godard also executed perfectly. That’s the sort of thing novels can never do.”

That said, he has also become a major evangelist for the television cable series, enthusing about shows such *Breaking Bad* and *Carnivàle*; he’s also very fired up about what he’s been able to achieve in the course of *The Borgias*, having written the bulk of the 30 episodes so far and supervised the whole operation. “At the heart of the series is the idea that power cannot operate without pretending to have a moral force behind it,” he explains. “You have Jeremy Irons as Rodrigo Borgia: the Pope, who is the centre of the Christian world yet is also the supreme manipulator of power. You’ve got great contradictions there, so you can investigate that necessary hypocrisy with which people are able to rule countries and invade others. It’s really the sort of thing that you can’t do in the cinema: taking your time to show the Borgia family being consumed by power, developing characters who become utterly twisted and abhorrent, yet still have an audience still interested in their actions.”

Given that *The Borgias* is based on the strict historical term of Rodrigo’s papacy and the material is thus finite, he hints that his Showtime adventure will be a one-off. But while his gammy leg keeps him in his writing chair, Jordan is determinedly upbeat on the prospects for his regular home turf in independent film: “I bumped into Jeremy Thomas a while back,” he says, “who produced all those wonderful movies with Bertolucci. He was saying that it was great while it lasted, but it’s all over. I’m not sure, though, that I agree. People will always find ways of making interesting movies. Look at *Life of Pi*, for instance. I definitely have the sense I can get stuff financed if I keep the price down. So I’m optimistic. I feel I’ve got lots more still to do.” With that he hobbles off, picks out a few notes on the piano in the corner, and heads back upstairs to papacy and bloodshed.



‘Byzantium’ is released in the UK on 31 May, and is reviewed on page 91. A Neil Jordan retrospective runs at the IFI, Dublin throughout May

There’s a kind of poetry in cinema you don’t get in literary fiction. It might seem a crime to say that, but you’ve got colour, movement, suggestibility

DEADLY IS THE FEMALE

Neil Jordan's 'Byzantium' sucks nourishment from a bloodline of female movie vampires

By Kim Newman

The vampire passed from folklore to literature in 1819 when Dr John Polidori wanted to make fun of his employer, Lord Byron. But the combination of bloodsucking corpse and aristocratic seducer established by Polidori's *The Vampyre* persisted, influencing Bram Stoker's creation of Count Dracula.

Though Joseph Sheridan LeFanu's 1872 novella *Carmilla* predates *Dracula*, its notion of a passive-aggressive girlish vampire hasn't often been imitated; most adaptations play up the lesbian eroticism and make its monster – memorably, Ingrid Pitt in *The Vampire Lovers* (1970) – a sexy, bloodthirsty wildcat rather than a manipulative, sickly kitten.

In the silent era, female vampires proliferated – but only metaphorically, thanks to Kipling's poem 'The Vampire', about the way a woman can suck the life out of a man. When Theda Bara made her name playing 'the Vampire' in the 1915 film *A Fool There Was* (its title taken from the first line of the poem), the character type took off. But the many films of the 1910s and 20s that use 'vampire' in the title refer to a species of goth gold-digger who's out for money rather than blood. So much so that by the time of *Dracula's Daughter* (1936), when the hero announces that he's out hunting vampires, his butler deadpans, "I thought one did that with chequebooks, sir."

The cinema's first female vampire as we understand the term today was the kohl-eyed Bat Girl (Edna Tichenor) in Tod Browning's now-lost *London After Midnight* (1927) – though she turns out to be a fake. In 1930, Bela Lugosi's *Dracula* has three silent wives and turns feeble Lucy into a wraith. All four are left undead at the end of the film by an oversight, though *Dracula's Daughter* picks up with Gloria Holden as the Count's melancholy, bisexual heiress. Carl Dreyer's *Vampyr* (1932) features an old female vampire who has had few imitators, while Browning's *Mark of the Vampire* (1935) – a remake of *London After Midnight* – casts Carol Borland as Luna: her flowing white robes, long black hair, pale face and feral hiss prefigure many a Hammer hoyden or Morticia Addams joke.

When Hammer revived gothic horror in the 1950s with added plunging necklines, they brought on a parade of buxom fanged starlets. Valerie Gaunt as Christopher Lee's



unnamed companion in *Dracula* (1958) coins the type, but others feature in follow-ups like *The Brides of Dracula* (1960) and *The Kiss of the Vampire* (1964). In all of these, vampire women are minions to Dracula types, brutally disposed of by prurient authoritarians – Barbara Shelley is gang-staked by monks in *Dracula Prince of Darkness* (1964). Even when Pitt's *Carmilla* is given a lead role, she's less formidable than continental vampire women like Barbara Steele in Mario Bava's *Black Sunday* (1960), Jacqueline Sieger in Jean Rollin's *Le Viol du vampire* (1968) or Delphine Seyrig's Dietrich-look Elisabeth Bathory in Harry Kümel's *Daughters of Darkness* (1971).

Female vampires proliferated in the 1970s, sometimes inspired by the historical Bathory (who was accused of bathing in virgins' blood), and often independent of any Dracula-style 'masters': Celeste Yarnall as *The Velvet Vampire* (1971), Mariclare Costello as the suicide bride of *Let's Scare Jessica to Death* (1971), Lesley Gilb as the den mother in *Lemora: A Child's Tale of the*

Supernatural (1973), Marilyn Chambers as a science-created mutant in *Rabid* (1976), Catherine Deneuve's icy club queen in *The Hunger* (1983). These in turn spun off even showier characters and made room for stunt castings like Grace Jones (*Vamp*, 1986), Sylvia Kristel (*Dracula's Widow*, 1988) and Anne Parillaud (*Innocent Blood*, 1992).

In artier 1990s efforts like Abel Ferrara's *The Addiction* and Michael Almereyda's *Nadja* (both 1994), the female vampire becomes an ideological warring ground, created by or mentored by a dominant male, whom she rejects in order to find her own identity. Thus stories about how vampires relate to humans give way to stories about how vampires relate to each other: Anne Rice is primarily interested in her androgynous male monsters, but her Lestat has to contend with his eternal-child 'daughter' (Kirsten Dunst in Neil Jordan's *Interview with the Vampire*, 1994) and the mother he turned into a night stalker (Lena Olin in *Queen of the Damned*, 2002). Even the *Twilight* films follow this arc, with Bella (Kristen Stewart), in the end, not just a girl who falls in love with a vampire but a girl who becomes a vampire.

Like Dennis Gansel's recent *We Are the Night* (2010), Neil Jordan's *Byzantium* postulates enmity between female and male vampires; in the former, the women have wiped out the men and formed an indulgent sisterhood, whereas the latter's mother-and-daughter team – whose references to the past include Clara (Gemma Arterton) using the alias "Camilla" [sic] – are on the run from aristocratic users who don't want them in the boys' club. ☹



'Mark of the Vampire'

GREAT SCOTT
Like the characters in his
novels, Fitzgerald, opposite,
led a gilded existence that
ultimately crumbled

WHICH SIDE OF PARADISE?

As Baz Luhrmann's 'The Great Gatsby' reaches our screens, it's clear that the wistfully beautiful worlds captured in the novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald have lost none of their capacity to fascinate us

By Nick James

In **'Tender Is the Night'**, the last novel that F. Scott Fitzgerald completed, the following description appears: "The hotel and its bright tan prayer rug of a beach were one. In the early morning the distant image of Cannes, the pink and cream of old fortifications, the purple alp that bounded Italy, were cast across the water and lay quavering in the ripples and rings sent up by sea plants in the clear shallows."

Our narrator, a young movie actress, is looking at Cannes from the fictionalised version of the Hôtel du Cap-Eden-Roc in Antibes (of which more later). It was while Fitzgerald was staying first there and later at a villa in Juan-les-Pins that he completed *The Great Gatsby*. It's tempting, therefore, to imagine his ghost will be on that beach on 15 May this year, gazing across at the firework display announcing the fact that the Cannes Film Festival opens with Baz Luhrmann's new film version of his finest novel.

The image is all the more persuasive because Fitzgerald liked to cast himself as a perpetual out-







'Gatsby' is the work of the diamond-bright Fitzgerald at the height of his fame, when his marriage was still alive and kicking with outrageous stunts

sider looking in on worlds that excluded him. In his early, highly successful fictions – the short-story collections *Flappers and Philosophers* and *Tales of the Jazz Age*; the novels *This Side of Paradise* and *The Beautiful and Damned* – his great theme was how a young man of lower background might woo a very rich young woman. *Gatsby* is his ultimate refinement of that theme. His later, less successful novels – *Tender Is the Night* and *The Love of the Last Tycoon* (aka *The Last Tycoon*) – were as much about coming to terms with Hollywood as they were about rubbing along with the rich.

As I write I've had no opportunity to see the new *Gatsby*, though it seems likely to be a camp extravaganza unafraid to exaggerate roaring-20s modernism. *Gatsby* (played this time by Leonardo DiCaprio and in two previous versions by Alan Ladd, 1948, and Robert Redford, 1974) is the love-struck poor boy who becomes a self-made millionaire in order to woo back his childhood sweetheart, who has married into old money while he was away fighting the Germans in the Great War. We first meet *Gatsby*, through the middle-class narrator figure Nick Carraway, in the palatial *nouveau riche* home where he's hosting the kind of decadent, jazz-age, prohibition-flouting party Luhrmann will exult in portraying. It's all done to attract his one true love Daisy (Carey Mul-

ligan this time; in the earlier versions, Betty Field and Mia Farrow, respectively), who lives across the waters of Long Island Sound in even more exclusive splendour.

Gatsby is the work of the diamond-bright Fitzgerald at the height of his fame, when his marriage to Zelda was still alive and kicking with outrageous stunts, prodigious drinking and a deal of philandering, before Zelda's lapses into mental illness became so severe that she had to be confined to a sanatorium. The character of Daisy is partly based on Zelda – for the middle-class Fitzgerald had eventually bagged his debutante – and partly on the high-class 'one that got away', Chicago heiress Ginevra King, who seems to have told a doting Fitzgerald that "poor boys shouldn't think of marrying rich girls".

Gilding the mythology of the rich is what made Fitzgerald a success. In his short story 'The Rich Boy', he coined the phrase "the very rich are different from you and me" (to which an Ernest Hemingway anecdote has someone reply, "Yes, they have more money"). But, though Fitzgerald is always keen to get the reader on his side by emphasising social disadvantage, we should not imagine that he was in any way a 'poor boy'. Writing about the Eden-Roc in a blog, Coco Chanel's biographer Justine Picardie wonders, "How did the Fitzgeralds ever afford to come here when he was an impecunious writ-



FACE TO FACE
Clockwise from top left: three faces of Daisy Buchanan from the film versions of 'The Great Gatsby' – Betty Field, 1948; Mia Farrow, 1974; Carey Mulligan, 2013; Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald; Chicago heiress Ginevra King, one of the models for Daisy

GETTY IMAGES (3) RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE (2) KOBAL COLLECTION (2)

er?" The answer can be found in *The New Yorker*, which roundly mocked Fitzgerald for being unable to live on \$20,000 a year (equivalent to more than \$250,000 today). His marriage to Zelda and his writings had made him pretty well-off.

Fitzgerald didn't become hard-up until the 1930s, by which time he was a forgotten man. It was then that he came cap in hand to Hollywood, in an attempt to escape a dire financial situation. If we want to trace how the writer went, emotionally, from being the golden boy who helped create the modern image of the Riviera to the self-despising hack who worked on a string of movie screenplays, without much success, it's not *Gatsby* that offers the insight but his final novels *Tender Is the Night* and *The Love of the Last Tycoon*.

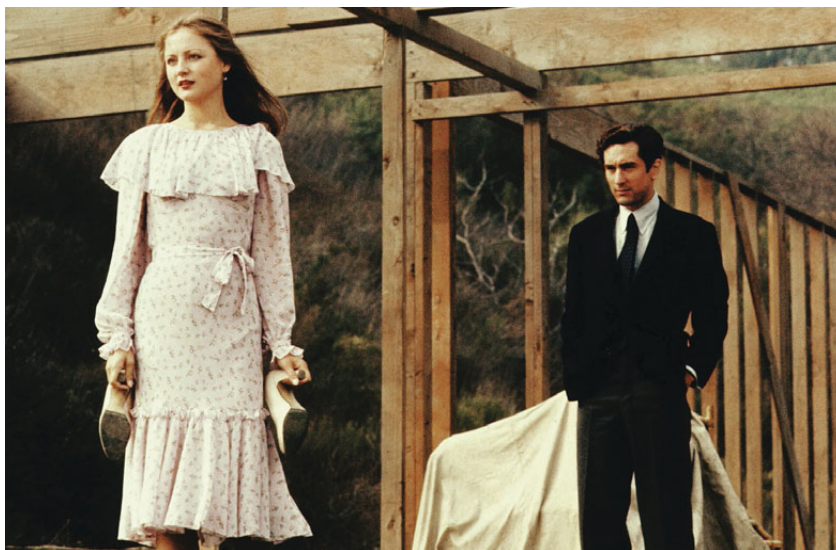
AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER

Tender Is the Night in its final form begins with a young movie actress, Rosemary Hoyt, arriving at Gausse's Hôtel des Etrangers (the fictionalised Eden-Roc) to become enamoured of the dazzlingly, casually rich couple Dick and Nicole Diver. Originally the novel – meant to follow on the heels of *Gatsby* – concerned a young male film technician, travelling with his mother, who falls in love with the Nicole character and gradually disintegrates in the decadent company of the Divers (called the Pipers in this version), until he kills his mother. After *Gatsby* failed to sell as well as its predecessors, Fitzgerald abandoned this version in 1927 and returned from Europe. Living off lucrative stories published in *The Saturday Evening Post*, and drinking heavily, he made no progress until he began working for the movies and started an affair with teenage movie star Lois Moran.

According to Fitzgerald's biographer Scott Donaldson, Lois helped the 30-year-old feel like the man of the world he'd always wanted to be – a mix of his macho friend Hemingway, his society chum Gerald Murphy and playwright Charles MacArthur (Fitzgerald wrote several now-uncelebrated plays). But what's more interesting in terms of the author's outsider persona is that he made Lois – in the shape of Rosemary Hoyt – the point-of-view voice in *Tender Is the Night* and had her fall in love with Dick Diver, who would reciprocate and save her from a career-damaging incident. He would also use a female perspective in his final, unfinished work, *The Last Tycoon* – that of Cecilia Brady, the daughter of a studio mogul.

Fitzgerald was extremely attentive to women. His fiction displays the most finely tuned social antennae, with a high degree of empathy for the emotions of propriety – what he called "that certain series of reticences and obligations that go under the poor old shattered word 'breeding'". His emotional perceptions are often bound into remarks that amount to a philosophy of politesse. His narrators are insightful *during* the event of their feelings. In his time, these felicities were not regarded as masculine skills. The kind of generously aware prose we find in *Tender Is the Night* has no place, for instance, in the art of screenwriting.

As David Thomson points out in his book *The Whole Equation*, "Fitzgerald had insights about Hollywood that he could never apply in practice. As a screenwriter he was a failure... not too far from a laughing stock or an embarrassment." Thomson goes on to quote the scene in *The Last Tycoon* in which über-producer Monroe Stahr (based



IN THE FRAME
Ingrid Boulting and Robert De Niro in Elia Kazan's 1976 adaptation of Fitzgerald's final novel 'The Last Tycoon'

on Irving Thalberg, and played in the 1976 movie by Robert De Niro) demonstrates brilliantly how to tell a story purely through images – "I was just making pictures," he says. Thomson's title comes from a remark about Hollywood in the opening pages of *The Last Tycoon*: "Not half a dozen men have been able to keep the whole equation of pictures in their heads." Fitzgerald came to an understanding of the artform that he needed, for economic reasons, to become good at, yet he plainly didn't have the chops. Even so, the prose style of the unfinished *The Last Tycoon* is, in some ways, evidence that he was beginning to get there. Gone is the sort of introspective writing that brings the finer insights of *Tender Is the Night*. Come too late is a determination to stick to action and dialogue.

In the last decade of his life Fitzgerald worked for the movies in the most humble fashion, though he was offered remarkable fees for doing so. A near-ghost of self-reproach, he would sit quietly at the dining tables of the MGM studio commissary among voluble writer friends like Anita Loos, Dorothy Parker (a former lover) and the Hacketts. In *The Last Tycoon* he describes the old writers' building as "a row of iron maidens left over from the silent days and still resounding with the dull moans of cloistered hacks and bums". He saw himself as one of them. But if Fitzgerald was this haunted figure with what he called "a two-cylinder inferiority complex", he willed up the spectres himself through copious drinking and a fascination with surface gaiety – the latter of which may make him perfect source material for Baz Luhrmann. I would say those two cylinders were not being good enough for his very rich peers and not being good enough for the movies.

THE INVENTION OF THE RIVIERA

But what did Fitzgerald do for the Riviera? Let me give a personal inflection. In the 1990s and into the early noughties, before indie film became the fragile, lean-to business it is today, towards the end of the Cannes Film Festival most of the attending British film press corps would be invited by Hamish McAlpine, head of the then-thriving UK film distributor Metro/Tartan, to an extended buffet luncheon at the Eden-Roc. It was the best place to be if you wanted to indulge in some discreet rubbernecking. Indeed, if you brought your



The Riviera is always in a state of decadence – a playground not only for American expats but also for freeloaders and mountebanks



swimming costume along, you could swim in the pool, sunbathe with the stars and check out the boldest of the paparazzi, perched camera-ready on the surf-battered rocks.

This was the only occasion (bar the red carpet) when the likes of us might blind ourselves in the full glare of the glamour of Cannes – and indeed of the French Riviera, for the hotel is at the apex of the region's allure. It is where *Vanity Fair* holds its famous party and where a good many stars have insisted on staying (when permitted: it's said that Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie were once turned away. Until 2005, the hotel did not accept credit cards, asking instead for cash or written bona fides).

It's hard to imagine, then, that in the early years of the 20th century the hotel used to be closed for the summer. The rich and/or aristocratic of that time – predominantly the English and the Russians – came south like birds, but only for the winter; by the end of April the season was over, because the pale-skinned Victorians deemed it too hot to remain and repaired to such northern watering holes as Deauville.

Apparently it was Gerald and Sarah Murphy – the very rich American friends of Fitzgerald to whom *Tender Is the Night* is dedicated (the Divers are a blending of the Murphys with the Fitzgeralds) – who first persuaded the owner and a skeleton staff to keep the Eden-Roc open for the summer so that their friends could come and stay. And since the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 had done for the Russian travellers and the expensive victory over the



Germans in 1918 had left the British economy utterly depleted, it was the Americans of the so-called 'lost' generation who flooded to the Paris of high modernism and then came south. You can argue, therefore, that the modern Riviera's glamour wasn't just imagined by Fitzgerald and his set of friends. Certainly Fitzgerald himself was keen to purvey a stronger claim. In *Tender Is the Night* he has Abe North, the drunk in love with his best friend Dick Diver's wife, say of the Divers' relationship with the Riviera, "They have to like it... they invented it."

By the time that novel was published in 1934, Fitzgerald was keen to show that the Riviera of 1925 – when the novel is set – had already gone. Now "many bungalows cluster near", whereas then "only the cupolas of a dozen old villas rotted like water lilies among the massed pines between the hotel... and Cannes, five miles away." It's a familiar 'lost paradise' attitude. Dirk Bogarde, during a television interview with Russell Harty in 1986, made the same complaint about the spoiling of the hillside opposite his villa in Grasse. More seriously, Graham Greene wrote a famous jeremiad in 1982 from his apartment in Antibes against organised crime and police corruption: 'l'Accuse: The Dark Side of Nice'.

The Riviera is always, it seems, in a state of decadence – a playground not only for charismatic American expats but also for the freeloaders and mountebanks you find in the stories of Somerset Maugham; or Cary Grant's John Robie in Hitchcock's *To Catch a Thief* (1955), in which the charming scoundrel is accused of stealing from tourists inspired to come to the Riviera by Fitzgerald's novels; or Michael Caine's less charismatic conman in *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* (1988). There's also the coming of Bardot in *And God Created Woman...* (1956), making Saint-Tropez the nexus of Côte d'Azur chic – but that's another story.

Today, Riviera glamour – however tawdry – remains in such details as the insistence of the Cannes festival that black tie must be worn to the evening screenings. But anyone walking the beaches after dark can experience what Fitzgerald describes: "The diffused magic of the hot sweet south had withdrawn into them – the soft-pawed night and the ghostly wash of the Mediterranean below."



'The Great Gatsby' is released in the UK on 16 May, and will be reviewed in the next issue

THE WRITER'S MUSE

Fitzgerald, top right with Zelda and daughter Scottie, drew inspiration from Lois Moran, top left, for the character of Rosemary Hoyt in 'Tender Is the Night', played by Jennifer Jones, right, in the 1962 film



BEAUTIFUL AND DAMNED

Made in 1926, the first film version of *'The Great Gatsby'* has sadly been lost, but contemporary reviews and a surviving trailer give a flavour of what it must have been like

By Pamela Hutchinson

If you want to make a hit, it pays to strike while the hype is hot. And so in 1926 Paramount gave F. Scott Fitzgerald \$45,000 for the rights to his bestseller *The Great Gatsby*, which had already, since its publication in 1924, become a Broadway smash too.

This first film of *Gatsby*, forged in the white heat of the Jazz Age when its flappers and yellow Rolls-Royces were hip rather than quaint, is sadly now lost. However, a minute-long trailer remains, salvaged from a reel in the US National Archives in Washington DC. From these few frames of guns, clinches and pool parties, from the reviews and the pulchritudinous cast, we can imagine what the first *Gatsby* film had to offer, though we may never be able to make a full comparison with the subsequent adaptations of 1948, 1974 and 2013.

That Broadway success was written by Pulitzer-winning dramatist Owen Davis and directed to great acclaim by George Cukor. While the film scenario was based on both the novel and the play, this was not to be Cukor's Hollywood debut. The director on duty was Herbert Brenon; born in Dublin and educated in England, he had been directing films since the early 1910s and was accustomed to seeing his name above the title. Today, Brenon's reputation (in so far as he has one at all) is for solidity rather than panache, but that doesn't mean he couldn't produce a spectacle: carnival throngs in *The Spanish Dancer* (1923), shimmering special effects in *Peter Pan* (1924) and desert battles in *Beau Geste* (1926). Little wonder, then, that he was picked to bring *Gatsby*'s excesses to the screen – by all accounts, the studio wanted ostentation rather than introspection.

The film had a glittering cast too – a handsome collection of the famous and the soon-to-be-famous. Imagine, if you will, the singing Cisco Kid, Warner Baxter, as Jay Gatsby; William Powell (dapper Nick Charles in the *Thin Man* films) as God-fearing mechanic George; and Georgia Hale, Chaplin's sweetheart in *The Gold Rush*, as his wandering wife Myrtle. Former beauty queen Lois Wilson, who appeared in film and TV soaps into the 1950s, was Daisy. Flapper Jordan Baker was played by Carmelita Geraghty,



All that jazz: the lost 1926 *'The Great Gatsby'* had a glittering cast of the famous and soon-to-be famous

fresh from a leading role in Hitchcock's debut feature *The Pleasure Garden*. Most intriguingly, the novel's watchful narrator Nick Carraway was played by model-turned-star Neil Hamilton, more popularly remembered as the morally vertical Commissioner Gordon in the 1960s *Batman* TV series.

How did this concoction taste? The most damning review of the film billed as "the dramatic thunderbolt of the season" came from Zelda Fitzgerald, a woman not known

The most damning review came from Zelda Fitzgerald, who wrote to her daughter: 'It's ROTTEN and awful'



Lois Wilson as Daisy and Warner Baxter as Gatsby

for holding back, who wrote to her daughter from LA: "It's ROTTEN and awful and terrible and we left." A few years later her husband was able to muster more diplomacy at a meeting with Wilson, who walked away with the impression that he approved of the film. Likewise the novelist John O'Hara, a friend of Fitzgerald's, remembered a feeling of "exultation" in the cinema, acclaiming "an honest job, true to the book".

The press reviews, which Fitzgerald pasted into his personal scrapbook, are more level-headed: this appears to have been a faithful adaptation but a gaudy one, with deliciously slangy intertitles. "Fitzgerald will certainly have no quarrel," wrote *Variety*, noting that "the niceties and un-niceties of Long Island life" were well displayed in a film "certain to be readily acclaimed by the average fan".

Mordaunt Hall in *The New York Times* was terser, damning Hamilton's performance as "most artificial" and the film as a whole "quite good entertainment" in need of "more imaginative direction", which favours "movie flashes without inculcating much in the way of subtlety". He disapproved of the partygoers ("modernists who have no gratitude or affection in their souls") and their boozing, particularly Daisy's hearty thirst for absinthe.

As with later adaptations, lukewarm reviews were paired with a middling box-office haul. While a rediscovered 1926 film adaptation would be a precious relic of the prohibition era, if you wanted to see *The Great Gatsby* in the 1920s, Cukor's stage production was probably the hotter ticket than Brenon's "beautiful little fool" of a movie. ☹

THE STYLE COUNCIL

The Fashion in Film Festival has hit on an ideal subject in the work of French director Marcel L'Herbier, an aesthete whose films were at least as much about eye-catching design as they were about coherent drama

By David Cairns

Marcel L'Herbier, though rarely screened today, created unmatched worlds of elegance and passion, commingling High Seriousness and High Camp in an ecstatic personal vision.

This month, the Fashion in Film Festival in London presents a series of L'Herbier screenings at various venues including the BFI Southbank, offering a unique chance to see movies from his late-silent and early-talkie work. These were L'Herbier's most exciting periods, when he was a star director able to command absolute control and spend lavishly.

The son of well-to-do intellectuals, L'Herbier studied law, literature and music. A youthful romance ended in public scandal when his lover shot him before turning the gun on herself. Both survived and L'Herbier's only permanent injury, the loss of the use of a finger, fortuitously kept him out of World War I.

Through his acquaintance with the actress Musidora, star of the serial *Les Vampires* (1915-16), he became excited by the possibilities of cinema and began writing criticism. An early, transfiguring experience was a screening of Cecil B. DeMille's *The Cheat* (1915), which he would remake in 1937. There are marked connections between DeMille's cinematic world and that of L'Herbier: a love of exoticism and decadence, and a wallowing in the sensual delights of fabulous clothes and interiors in which objects such as perfume bottles are fetishised.

L'Herbier sold a couple of scenarios before becoming a director himself at Gaumont. A first film was abandoned due to the war but in 1918 he scored an artistic triumph with *Rose-France*, a dreamlike fable with nakedly autobiographical elements: the hero Laurs (played by L'Herbier's regular lead Jaque Catelain) is a wealthy invalid unable to take part in the war, and the image of a mutilated hand haunts the action. Laurs becomes jealous of his beloved, but it transpires that the only other love in her life is France.

L'Herbier's oeuvre is sometimes grouped with that of fellow 'impressionists' like Germaine Dulac and Jean Epstein, and there is some family resemblance. Using Vaseline-streaked filters and shallow focus, much of the frame is a gauzy smear, pierced by vignettes of sharp action. Shadowy, low-key lighting and images distorted as in a fairground mirror likewise conjure an oneiric, ominous atmosphere. Spectral double



TOP DOWN

Marcel L'Herbier, centre, with camera on the set of his 1933 film *'L'Épervier'*





exposures and lap dissolves melt one image into another, as characters wander moodily (but photogenically) near stormy seas. Editing reaches a stroboscopic frenzy in scenes of violent action. There's a concentration on evoking intense emotional states through sustained sequences, often at the expense of plot momentum.

But L'Herbier's love of luxury sets him apart. The Spanish-set *El Dorado* (1921) may deal with the poor but it centres on a tawdry yet glamorous nightclub, as tempting a target for L'Herbier's design fetish as *The Blue Angel* would be for Sternberg; there's even time to have the characters somnambulate through the Alhambra. All the impressionists were swooning aesthetes, but L'Herbier particularly liked to be swathed in elegance – and he liked his characters swathed in it too.

With *L'Inhumaine* (1924), *Feu Mathias Pascale* (1925) and *Le Vertige* (1926), L'Herbier plunged ever deeper into a cinema of outrageously chic design; promising collaborators were scooped up, and the work of other filmmakers studied for innovations that could be employed in his increasingly giddy, rapturous cinema. One valued assistant was production designer Alberto Cavalcanti, a Brazilian polymath who went on to a distinguished directing career (*Went the Day Well?*, *Dead of Night*) in Britain and elsewhere. Costume designer Claude Autant-Lara also became a filmmaker in his own right, directing Tati, Gabin and Bardot before embarking in the 1980s on a less savoury career as a far-right politician.

L'Herbier openly competed with Abel Gance for the crown of supreme genius of French cinema, moving the camera as freely and aggressively as Gance had done in *Napoleon* (1927), swooping over his sets on a swing, cycling around the walls or lurching in, handheld, for distorted close-ups. At times he seems to be channelling the demonic presence from Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead*.

With the arrival of sound, some aspects of the director's silent work remained: characters are often archetypal rather than individual, drawn in broad brushstrokes; plot twists jerk them around without much regard for psychology, though this works fine in light-hearted thrillers like *Le Mystère de la chambre jaune* (1930) and *Le Parfum de la dame en noir* (1931), twin romps full of stunts, puzzles and dazzling *moderne* design. But at times L'Herbier's talkies do attain complexity, as in the perverse love story *Le Bonheur* (1934), which merges terrorism, filmmaking and masochistic love.

During the German occupation L'Herbier continued unabated, avoiding censorship by plunging still further into fantasy. *La Nuit fantastique* (1942) portrays a more benign version of the waking-dream state in Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*. L'Herbier's later work is rarely seen but his rather mechanically plotted *The Last Days of Pompeii*, made in Italy in 1948, evokes an ultra-chic ancient world as gloriously science-fictional as Fellini's, while offering a final cataclysm on a par with the best of Hollywood.

For his last film, the television documentary *La Féerie des fantômes* (1975), L'Herbier revisited the fragments of his first, unfinished film, *Fantômes*, thus neatly closing the circle of his career. He died in 1979.

i The 4th Fashion in Film Festival 'Marcel L'Herbier: Fabricating Dreams' is in BFI Southbank and other London venues from 10 to 19 May

L'INHUMAINE (1924)



1



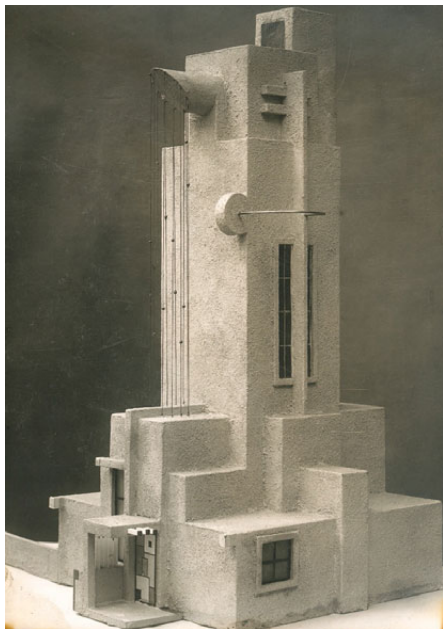
2

1 This tale of a rich *belle dame sans merci* wallows in impossibly chic yet chilly and 'inhuman' interiors. It begins with cocktails and ends with electro-galvanism.

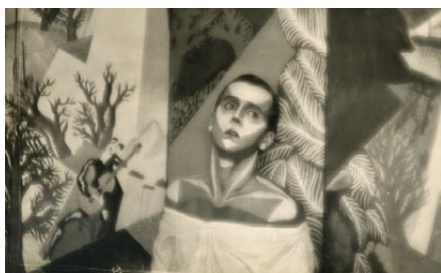
L'Inhumaine's art directors, Claude Autant-Lara and Alberto Cavalcanti, each went on to distinguished directing careers of their own. Autant-Lara also helped design the costumes here, ensuring the angular silhouettes and exuberant patterns meshed with the overall look. Even the potted plants are hand-crafted, their gentle curves setting off the stiletto sharpness of Jacque Catelain's lapels.

2 Fernand Léger, prophet of 'tubism,' designed Catelain's mad science laboratory as well as an animated title sequence in which his trademark pipes ooze forth like steel toothpaste. Prefiguring the lunatic electrical contraptions of Kenneth Strickfaden, which crackle and spark in the alchemical rumpus room of *Frankenstein* (1931), the mysterious life-giving contraptions here don't even pretend to be anything other than dazzling decoration, not unlike the film's plot.

Catelain's plastic double-breasted



3



4

boiler suit proudly declares: if you're going to defy the laws of nature, you may as well look good doing it.

3 Respected architect Robert Mallet-Stevens constructed a cubist concrete tower, a true 'machine for living in': the first few floors were life size, and for wide shots of the whole thing there was miniature-work. On the inside, it opened up, TARDIS-fashion, into cavernous neon-lit bunkers.

Mallet-Stevens was the top modern architect in France, next to Le Corbusier. His Villa Noailles inspired Man Ray's film *Les Mystères du Château de Dés* (1929).

4 Here, L'Herbier succeeds in transforming his star into part of the scenery as his face is painted until he becomes a piece of living artwork – arguably the true goal of the L'Herbier aesthetic all along.

Jaque Catelain was generally believed to be L'Herbier's lover, though the director was married to his star Marcelle Pradot, described by Louis Delluc as "the Infanta of French cinema".

LE VERTIGE (1926)



This romantic melodrama starts with the Russian Revolution staged in the high, cramped corridors and huge shadowy chambers of the mansions of the rich – perfectly scaled for channelling floods of furious proletariat. But we soon decamp to the south of France and more sunlit luxury. Cote d'Azur locations give way to swellegant studio interiors, anticipating the luxurious art deco salons with which Cedric Gibbons would soon be reshaping Hollywood. The screen doors, panelled in milky white, slide open automatically, enhancing the futuristic feel.

L'ARGENT (1928)



1

1 For his last silent film, L'Herbier pulled out all the stops. He fashioned an epic of high finance with an unchained camera which swings overhead, skims the walls or drops, spinning from a rope, into the actual premises of the stock exchange. In the vast bank set it floats over glossy checkerboard floors like a chesspiece slid by a grandmaster.

As usual, L'Herbier surrounds himself with talent, in this case including art directors Lazare Meerson and André Barsacq. Meerson had already begun his long collaboration with René Clair after starting his career with L'Herbier on *Feu Mathias Pascal*. Barsacq was making his debut here: L'Herbier seems to have enjoyed combining experienced professionals with innovative first-timers.



2

2 Brigitte Helm snakes lithely through lambent, towering apartments panelled in silvery zigzags, her every costume a startling statement. An explosion of feathers swathes her upper torso, her beaked head emerging in a slouch so she resembles a vulture in negative. And that's just her day-wear. Crowned with a series of tiaras, cloche hats or skull caps, she slinks through the movie, an embodiment of eroticised malevolence, psychology subordinated to silhouette. This was the age when movie costumes could be not just character statements but flamboyant expressions of artistry, unfettered by realism.

LE PARFUM DE LA DAME EN NOIR (1931)



1

1 By the time of this talkie, L'Herbier was in a lighter, more romantic and fantastical mode. The second of a pair of films based on the popular thrillers of Gaston Leroux (following *Le Mystère de la chambre jaune*), it unfolds in a paradise of utopian poshlust, from the producer's credit adorning a perfume bottle to the Mediterranean chateau in creamy white with black trimmings, looking like a piano keyboard refracted through frosted glass.

Costume designer Jacques Manuel came up with the idea of the four identical Chinese houseboys sporting swastikas: no political symbolism should be inferred, it's just delirious exoticism to match the African masks on the walls.

2 The soigné gowns worn by Wera Engels maintain both the romantic illusion and the black-and-white motif. The German actress plays a rich American, though her accent is equally awkward whether she speaks French or English. But that's OK, since reality is an unwelcome guest in this highly reflective house of intrigue.



2

L'EPERVIER (1933)



Continuing his habit of employing real high-fashion designers and artists, L'Herbier showcases the work of haut couturier Lucien Lelong in a brazen bit of product placement.

Lelong's wife Natalie Paley (an actual Russian princess) co-stars with a young Charles Boyer, who was at that time shuttling across the Atlantic waiting to make it big in Hollywood. He did, soon after.

This film is now so little-seen that the only IMDb review is from the late F. Gwyneplaine MacIntyre, normally a specialist in creating fictional reviews of lost films.



Michael Haneke **Amour**

Winner of this years Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film, 2 BAFTA's including Best Actress and the coveted Palme d'Or at last years Cannes Film Festival. Amour is one of the most powerfully moving, emotionally devastating pieces of cinema ever made.

AVAILABLE ON DVD, BLU-RAY
AND ON DEMAND NOW



Cate Shortland **Lore**

Left to fend for themselves after their SS officer father and mother are interred by the victorious Allies at the end of World War II, five German children undertake a harrowing journey that exposes them to the reality and consequences of their parents' actions.

AVAILABLE ON DVD, BLU-RAY
AND ON DEMAND 27TH MAY



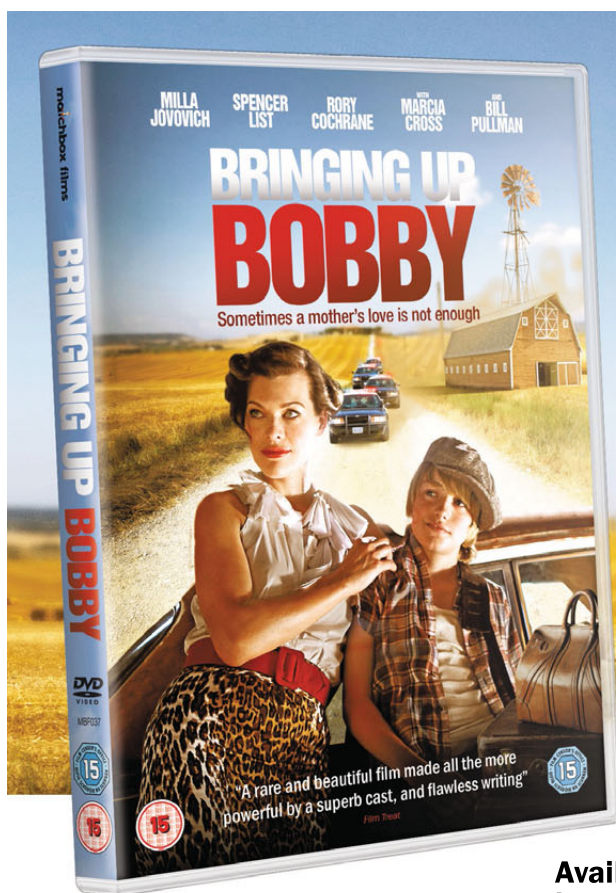
Bess Kargman **First Position**

This award-winning documentary follows six young dancers as they prepare for a chance to enter the world of professional ballet, struggling through bloodied feet, near exhaustion and debilitating injuries, all while navigating the drama of adolescence. A showcase of awe-inspiring talent, tenacity and passion.

AVAILABLE ON DVD AND
ON DEMAND 27TH MAY

Pre-order now at amazon.co.uk

Free Super-saver Delivery and Unlimited Free One-day Delivery with Amazon Prime are available. Terms and conditions apply. See www.amazon.co.uk for details.



"A rare and beautiful film made all the more powerful
by a superb cast, and flawless writing"

Film Treat

"Sensitively acted, carefully
written and directed with
heartfelt compassion"

The New York Observer



Available to
buy on DVD

MAY 13th

Pre-order now
amazon.co.uk

CATCH THE WIND

After his foray into international thriller territory with *'Carlos'*, Olivier Assayas's new film *'Something in the Air'* returns to the autobiographical 1970s he first explored nearly 20 years ago in *'L'Eau froide'*. For the director, making the film proved a journey in itself, into a language and mindset he had almost forgotten

By Kieron Corless



PHOTOGRAPHY BY FABRIZIO MALESE

FELLOW TRAVELLERS
Christine (Lola Créton) and Gilles (Clément Métayer), right, in *'Something in the Air'*, directed by Olivier Assayas, above

'Something in the Air', Olivier Assayas's semi-autobiographical 14th feature, takes place in the rural outskirts of Paris in 1971, where the director's teenage alter ego Gilles (Clément Métayer) and his friends are living through a very particular historical juncture, more clearly signalled by the film's French title, *Après mai*. The revolution, so-called, of May 1968 has definitively failed but its fires are not yet extinguished. Anarchist and radical-left groups of varying stripes abound. Gilles and his circle, too young to have participated directly in *les événements*, are nevertheless deeply marked by what has occurred, their idealistic fervour spilling out in demonstrations, charged meetings and debates, dissemination of newspapers and pamphlets, running battles with a brutal police force and graffiti and petrol-bomb attacks on their own school. Mapped onto this political ferment are the seductions of poetry and art (Gilles is an aspiring painter) and of a folky, hippified counterculture, frowned upon by the Trotskyists and Maoists, through which a more familiar adolescent search for identity and a place in the world threads its course.

"The years of lead" is how this period is commonly referred to, as Assayas notes in his recently published memoir *A Post-May Adolescence*, which covers much of the same territory as the new film and functions as a companion to it. That resonant phrase nails the hardening of militant orthodoxies as well as the slow waning and dispersal of the energies unleashed by '68, with all the sadness that entailed, but it doesn't really do justice to what the film manages to capture. Assayas looks back on his unformed adolescent self and the complex era he inhabits with tenderness





and respect. For all its excesses, no one is judged or condescended to, and Assayas avoids the infantilising clichés the 1970s usually attracts. Despite the militant clamour and moments of real violence, the overall mood is akin to contemplative pastoral idyll, ushered along by a soundtrack of 1970s folk and psychedelia in which several songs play out in their entirety. It feels, in fact, more like a privileged lost time: sunlit, alive and pregnant with opportunity, its profoundly engaged protagonists opening themselves up fully to a world they desperately want to make a mark on and change for the better.

That becalmed surface masks turbulent inner lives, however, and points to other carefully seeded tensions girding the episodic, languorous flow. Adults inevitably appear out of touch with their offspring. Gilles's father, like Assayas's own, is a screenwriter keen to recruit his resistant son into the more commercial end of the film industry. Gilles chooses instead to pursue an artistic vocation, in turn regarded by more rigidly militant peers as unacceptably bourgeois and individualist. That points to yet another duality, between a Marxist materialist view of the world as opposed to that "something in the air" – veiled, intangible realities.

Assayas has never made any bones about his intense admiration for the great 'spiritual' directors – Bresson, Tarkovsky, Bergman; here, not dissimilarly to Bresson in *The Devil, Probably* (1977), his ambition is to portray a generation, to trace the invisible lineaments of its desires, however inchoate. There are consuming sacrificial fires and even a resurrection brought to pass by cinema – the direction in which, despite himself, Gilles is ultimately heading. His epiphany occurs in London, where Assayas himself pitched up in time to sample the rigours of punk, our very own belated howl of discontent. You could argue there's never been a truly great fiction film chronicling the upheavals of UK76, but I'd venture that Olivier Assayas might be just the director to pull it off.

Kieron Corless: Your last film *'Carlos'* (2010) was also set in the 1970s, though it was vastly different in tone and perspective. Did it somehow trigger *'Something in the Air'*?

Olivier Assayas: *Carlos* is like the dark side of the 1970s. It was a world I didn't know back then; it was happening in some parallel reality but the background sets, the costumes, the way of speaking were all very familiar. When I started writing *Carlos*, specifically when I was starting to write political dialogue, it was like getting in touch with a language you used to speak but have since lost, so there was this mix of familiarity and strangeness. With *Something in the Air* I suppose I needed to reappropriate the 1970s in some way, to put it into a perspective where I am not some kind of distant observer – where I'm in the chaos of growing up in it, and trying to make sense of it.

KC: Your film doesn't go down obvious routes in its representation of the era.

OA: I realised that, at least in France, no one had painted a decent picture of those times. It's either ridiculed on TV, like "look at those hippies", or idealised, like "those were political times, people were conscious and involved and today it's only videogames", or whatever. So it's one or the other but never anything that has to do with the reality of it, the complexities of it and the fact that those despised, overlooked years were very much the fabric of modern society in many ways. I kind of rejected those

years too, like anybody that was involved in the punk rock scene of the 1970s and 80s; you just wanted to throw all that out the window. I only gradually came back to it and had to admit it was important.

KC: The French title *'Après mai'* has a more specific resonance than the English one; the usual narrative is of a mood of defeat after 1968, but you show utopianism and revolutionary fervour as still very much alive.

OA: What you have to realise is that at that time May '68 was not mythologised. It was a failed revolution. Something had happened, and it was not clear what. People were trying to make sense of it still. There's not one historian who has really cracked it. Was it a social revolution? Was it a revolution of youth? What they learned back then from May '68 is that such an event could happen; meaning that, in terms of a Marxist reading, those were revolutionary times, there was potential for revolution. May '68 was a failure but there was the desire, the energy within the society to have a revolution, and it was not an abstraction. All of a sudden you had this dogmatic leftism that got organised, because it would be working for the coming revolution. They hated everything that society had to give them, they did not trust it or want any of it: no jobs, no career, no family. Everything had to be invested in the future, and that's what carried the 1970s.

In that sense, if there have been revolutionary times in recent memory, it was that period, which was reinventing everything – in terms of individual freedom, empowerment of the individual, reconsidering our relationship to history, to the very fabric of society. The shared notion was that nothing was impossible so long as it didn't connect with anything society wanted. There was a rejection of consumption, of the obsession with commodities that had become so prevalent, a rejection of bourgeois politics... as much as it was a crazy time, it was also a remarkably creative moment on all levels; it was a laboratory for what society became.

KC: But it's also very factionalised and tribal in the film.

OA: It might've been more obvious in England than in France, because in France you had this different mix. The minority I was part of was involved in the counterculture. I suppose I would have defined myself as somewhere in the area of whatever the hippies were doing; my heroes were Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin. And you had leftist politics that hated everything to do with counterculture – that was the majority. There were two, three, four variants of Trotskyism all hating each other; you had various Maoist groups; you had a couple of anarchist groups. You had this dogmatic leftism that suddenly got organised – groups with militants, slogans, theoreticians, newspapers and small cells, scattered in universities all over France. But you couldn't really discuss music with them or anarchist politics, or art, or the underground press, or soft drugs, or Oriental spirituality – which was all part of what was exciting about those times. It was two very different strains, and what was interesting was the dialectics of it. I thought there was something there to explore and to represent in ways that have never been done before in movies; plus there was the opportunity to work with very young actors, and reconnect with something that has to do with youth.

KC: A lot of this stuff must have seemed quite alien to your young actors. How did you go about casting?

OA: I saw a lot of very interesting kids but they were kids



WHITE RIOT

The teenage protagonists of *'Something in the Air'* get swept up in the excitement of street demonstrations



of today and they would've had a hard time not only understanding what was going on in the 1970s but also adopting the body language, the attitude. So it was a matter of finding individuals who could fit in the mould of the 1970s, but always assuming there was zero chance they would be interested in the politics of it. No one is anymore, even people who are involved in politics today; 70s politics are too crazy or weird, it's a lost continent. But while I was casting the film, I realised my one point of entry was art. If I used kids with some kind of artistic vocation, drawing or making music or writing, it puts them slightly aside in their generation; it means they're slightly introspective – so they are not completely absorbed by the common values of their generation. In that sense they could understand something of what the characters were about; they had this individuality, this singularity that was valued in the 1970s

KC: How does 'Something in the Air' connect to your earlier 1970s-set 1994 film 'L'Eau froide' ('Cold Water', shown on TV in the UK but never released here theatrically).

OA: *L'Eau froide* is a film that captures in a poetic way what the 70s were about; so many things were missing from the film even if there was something true in terms

of the energy. It's more of a punk-rock film than anything that has to do with the mood and the taste of the 70s. I think at a certain point I understood that. Ultimately that's how a movie like *Something in the Air* became possible – it has to do with the mood, the pace, the feelings of the 70s, in the sense that the 70s were about leaving the city, reconnecting with nature and tradition. There was this whole pastoral, bucolic thing that had to do with British folk rock, and a desire to travel to this dream of the Orient. I became conscious that there was a film about the 1970s to be made that could complement *L'Eau froide*.

KC: How important was it for you to get the textures and visual details in the film right?

OA: Growing up then, specific art, specific music, specific writing had very deep, powerful meanings. I'm not sure how it is for kids growing up today but in the 70s you grew up defined by your relation to culture. So a book was not just a book. When I managed to get hold of a book of poems by Allen Ginsberg or Lawrence Ferlinghetti, they were like magical objects: they were loaded with something that was so powerful. Same with the music. I remember buying an album by Syd Barrett and it was just a moment of pure bliss. It's

I needed to put the 1970s into a perspective where I am not some kind of distant observer – where I'm in the chaos of growing up in it



AFTER THE WAVE

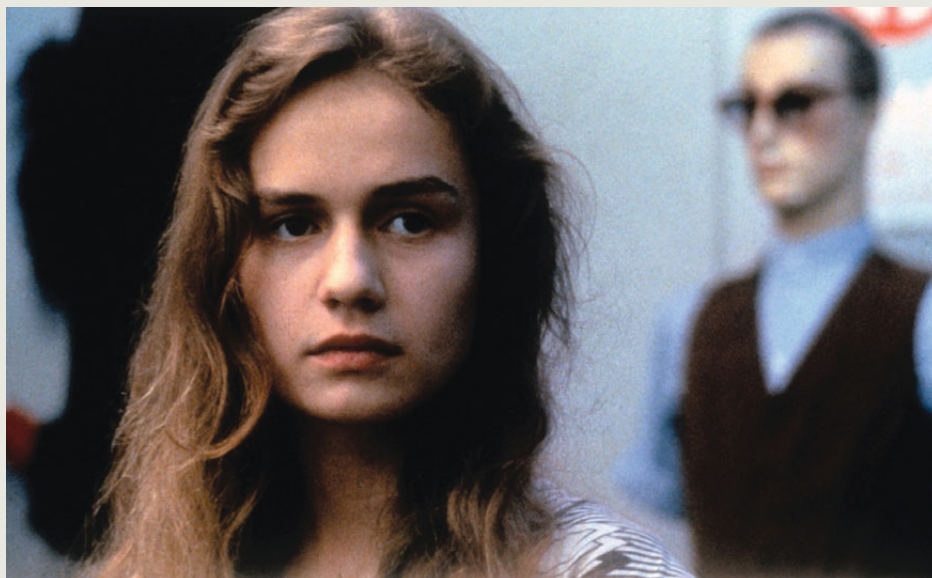
For all his interest in the events of 1968, Olivier Assayas belongs to a French tradition that moved beyond the overt political gestures of Godard

By David Thompson

At one of the gatherings in *Something in the Air*, the famous challenge laid down by Jean-Luc Godard is invoked: "The problem is not to make political films, but to make them politically." After 1968, Godard himself retreated for a decade from mainstream cinema to pursue this goal, while the editorial policy of *Cahiers du cinéma* was to attack the likes of Costa-Gavras for failing to transcend spectacle in their 'political' films. But throughout the 1970s, French cinema continued to be split between brazen entertainment headlined by local stars (Jean-Paul Belmondo, Alain Delon) and more personal, authored films. Although distinctive directors like Bertrand Tavernier and Bertrand Blier made their auspicious debuts in the 70s, arguably the most influential filmmakers to explore the hangover from the street party that was May '68 were three men who stood defiantly apart from any movement: Philippe Garrel, Maurice Pialat and Jean Eustache. Divided aesthetically, they were nevertheless united by a focus on autobiography as their true subject – what has been dubbed 'autofiction' – and emotional truth as their ultimate goal.

Dubbed the Rimbaud of French cinema, Garrel placed texture and feeling over narrative and characterisation, exploring his own experiences of sex and drugs in films like the abstract *La Cicatrice intérieure* (1972) or the minimalist *L'Enfant secret* (1979), a film so private it was (and remains) very hard to see. Garrel's presence was overshadowed by that of Pialat, who died in 2003 after completing ten features. His fierce intransigence and rejection of anything that looked contrived were finally rewarded by commercial success, especially with *A nos amours* (1983), which revealed a new star in Sandrine Bonnaire as a teenage girl adrift in the post-'68 world of sexual liberation and oedipal conflict with an older generation.

But the French filmmaker who most personifies that era must be Jean Eustache, who committed suicide in 1981. At over three hours, his intimate epic *La Maman et la Putain* (1974) – the story of a dissolute, morally rootless young man (played by Jean-Pierre Léaud, former icon of the New Wave) and his *ménage à trois* – took cinema



A new generation: Sandrine Bonnaire in 'A nos amours' by Pialat, a filmmaker who has grown in stature

back to basics with a brutally direct view of conflicting desires and a shooting style not far advanced from that of the Lumière brothers.

However, none of this formidable trio can truly be connected with the domestic and international success of their three counterparts characterised as the 'cinéma du look' of the 1980s: Jean-Jacques Beineix, Luc Besson and Leos Carax. Besson hit the big time with *The Big Blue* (1988) and went on to embrace blockbuster aesthetics, while after *Diva* (1981) Beineix lost his way in self-indulgence; the wayward outsider Carax, meanwhile, only recently returned to favour with *Holy Motors* (2012). However, their example was not followed by the next wave of talented filmmakers who emerged fully in the 1990s, among whom Olivier Assayas has proved to be one of the most prolific.

At a roundtable of this generation (including Assayas) assembled to discuss the impact of the 60s New Wave on their own work, directors Cédric Kahn (*Red Lights*, 2004) and Noémie Lvovsky (*Camille Rewinds*, 2012) were adamant that Pialat was far more significant as their spiritual guide. Certainly, his impulse to explore human relations in all their discomforting complexity, without regard to traditionally structured scripts or dramatic expectations, has been solidly behind the films of Arnaud Desplechin (*A Christmas Tale*, 2008) and Xavier Beauvois (*Of Gods and Men*, 2010), to name but two.

But then such successful contemporary French directors as Jacques Audiard and

François Ozon appear less bound by any specific home-grown tradition, while with the pervasive presence of US independent feature and Asian cinema, it has become harder to pinpoint obvious national influences. Even the most popular French film of recent times, *Untouchable* (2011), looks like a blueprint for a Hollywood remake.

That said, Garrel continues to plough his introspective furrow, and there are still signs of the bullish attitude of the 70s French triumvirate in such confrontational talents as Abdellatif Kechiche (*Couscous*, 2007) and even Maïwenn, whose hit film *Polisse* (2011) was nothing if not against the grain of making tidy, packaged entertainments.

In fact, a positive aspect of the post-'68 French cinema scene has been the growing number of significant female directors. Claire Denis has followed her own visually poetic path and found a substantial audience for 'difficult' films like *Beau travail* (1999). Others such as Sandrine Veysset (*Will It Snow for Christmas?*, 1996) have struggled to maintain a career. Pascale Ferran, who made her acclaimed *Lady Chatterley* (2006) after 13 years' absence from the big screen, took the opportunity at the César awards to make an impassioned plea for greater support of medium-budget filmmaking in France.

By any other country's standards, indigenous production remains generously subsidised in France, and there is still a significant emergence each year of first-time filmmakers. Interestingly, the April 2013 edition of *Cahiers du cinéma* highlights seven *jeunes cinéastes français* whose debut features will soon be released, proposing that their common aesthetic is an ardent lyricism. If the subject is political, then it must be explored through the personal – that, if anything, is the continuing legacy of the 70s. 

At a roundtable to discuss the impact of the New Wave, directors were adamant that Pialat was more significant

 something that's very difficult to transmit, but it was always part of the project – a homage to the lost underground culture of the 70s.

But when I was preparing the film, I realised obviously that if I wanted to even touch a fraction of that, it involved doing things I'd never really done on my movies – being much more involved in the props, the set design etc. Because when we were preparing the film, I was basically the only person who was able to say this is right or this is wrong with a specific prop. It didn't come naturally to the guy I usually work with. I mean, he's brilliant, a genius at doing fake passports on *Carlos* or whatever, but when it comes to recreating leaflets that could have been designed by those kids in 1971 I'm basically the only person, because I actually did it. So not only did I gradually get a little more obsessive than I usually am about details, but I also realised it was part of what the film was about: recreating in a believable way the complexities of the 1970s ambience.

KC: Maybe related to that is how it all seems toned down, dramatically. There are moments where other directors might have ramped it up but you resist the temptation.

OA: It has to do with the special status this film has for me. That material, the way I grew up, is something I've used before. It's basically where a couple of my other films come from but there I used the material in a much more dramatised, classical narrative. Here I wanted to go back to the origin, to the facts. I thought that whatever was going on was enough drama for me. I wanted to see if I could make a film based on the non-fictionalised texture of the events. Of course I'm concerned that I'm not being boring, and being fast enough to keep the audience awake, but it was essential to me to be able to structure my narrative without overdramatising; keeping within the framework of what happens in real life, which emphasises the craziness of those times. I mean, some of those things are very minor but when you're 17 years old, it feels like an adventure – you're going to Italy to stay in a youth hostel, it's fascinating. I thought it was more interesting to try and find the emotions in much more low-key moments – ending up on a farm and being confronted by radical workers, or going to Pompeii to paint the ruins. It's that kind of everyday poetry, that can be shared by anybody, that I wanted to capture.

KC: It's interesting you don't delve into your characters' psychology or try to explain why they behave the way they do.

OA: I think that has to do with the relationship I have with the actors. When they ask me about characters' background, my answer is always: "Whatever you bring,



whatever you want it to be." I don't care. What I care about is what I'm seeing in the moment – cinema happens in the moment. You can deal with it in a million different ways, but when there's someone in front of the camera and it's rolling, that's really when it's happening. The rest is bullshit. It's just the hard fact of what you're capturing on screen. I don't care what you put behind the line, what interests me is that the line sounds real; so in that sense I'm always happier when the actors bring their own ideas of background to the character. Ultimately that's their job – it's the way they appropriate the part. And that's how they bring something I didn't imagine, and didn't expect.

 'Something in the Air' is released in the UK on 24 May, and is reviewed on page 90

INSIDE AND OUT Laure (Carole Combes, top) provides a worldly counterpoint to the rural idyll of Gilles's blossoming artistic ambition, below



YEARS OF LEAD Edgar Ramírez as the title character in the biopic 'Carlos'; far left, and Cyprien Fouquet in Assayas's semi-autobiographical 'L'Eau froide', left, offer very different takes on the 1970s





A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

This month's theatrical release of the late Claude Miller's final film, 'Thérèse Desqueyroux', owes much to the pulling power of its star Audrey Tautou, but it should also inspire film lovers to explore the fascinating oeuvre of a master of the art of adaptation

By Nick Roddick

MILLER'S TALE
Audrey Tautou, left, is perfectly cast in the title role of 'Thérèse Desqueyroux', adapted from François Mauriac's novel by the late Claude Miller, above

If you saw Jacques Audiard's *Rust and Bone* last year you may have spotted its opening dedication: "à Claude Miller". It's a tribute to the late French director, who died of cancer in April 2012 at the age of 70, from the man who had one of his first writing credits on Miller's 1983 thriller *Mortelle randonnée* (*Deadly Run*) and more recently co-produced his 2009 film *I'm Glad My Mother Is Alive* (*Je suis heureux que ma mère soit vivante*). Miller was a master of the brand of cinema that Audiard has made his own: intelligent, character-driven dramas, often adapted from books, often thrillers that in some way transcend the limitations of the genre. But while Audiard's career flourished over the last decade and more, Miller – though still working – had slipped from view.

A few years ago I found myself on a festival jury with Claire Clouzot, niece of the great French director Henri-Georges Clouzot and one-time head of the International Critics' Week in Cannes. We were talking about – what else? – films and eventually got round to our choices for 'most underrated director'. I made a few suggestions, which Claire dismissed. Then I suggested Miller. "Ah oui!" she exclaimed with a positive outpouring of enthusiasm. "Absolument!"

More than that, you could almost say Miller is 'unknown' in the Anglo-Saxon world, for too few of his films have been widely distributed. So it's gratifying to report that his final film, *Thérèse Desqueyroux*, is released in the UK this month, albeit more on account of its star Audrey Tautou (see p.55) than on the strength of Miller's reputation. But Miller's other 17 features as director (including two documentaries) are well worth investigating too. While there's not room here for a title-by-title assessment of four decades of filmmaking, what follows are general pointers and some – hopefully tantalising – close-ups of Miller's work.

His workrate amounts to more or less one feature every two years since 1976, a steady but not spectacular output, which may well have been overlooked because Miller is a cinematic stylist with no obvious style of his own. Instead, he puts that style at the service of whatever story he is telling. What's more, that story is rarely of his own invention: 13 of his 16 features were adapted from a novel (in many cases an English-language one), a play, a newspaper article or – in the case of *La Petite Voleuse* (1988) – an unfilmed screenplay by François Truffaut. If this makes Miller, in Andrew Sarris's terms, a *metteur en scène*, then so be it.

By all accounts the screenplay was, for Miller, the key element in the filmmaking process. "What he really needed was a structure," according to his widow Annie Miller, who produced six of her husband's films and co-wrote two of them. "I'm like a vampire," Miller himself is quoted as saying in the press notes for *Thérèse Desqueyroux*. "I'm a thief. Adaptation is absolutely fascinating." It is for this fascination with the art of adaptation, coupled with his consummate storytelling skill, that Miller deserves to be celebrated. His fellow director Claude Sautet, for instance, described him as the greatest *metteur en scène* of his generation.

Here's just one example of Miller's skilful *mise en scène*, taken from *An Impudent Girl* (*L'Effrontée*, 1985), the film that provided the 13-year-old Charlotte Gainsbourg with her first starring role. It's the story of Charlotte, a lonely provincial girl who becomes besotted with her new 'friend' Clara, a slightly older piano prodigy who is in town to give a recital. Surrounded by carers, tutors and managers, Clara is lonely in her own way and casually invites Charlotte to come to a party at



her lakeside villa, offering to lend her a dress for the evening. The sequence is split into three components. In the first, Clara leads Charlotte to her closet and points to a rack of beautiful dresses, by far the most attention-grabbing of which is a bright red one, which inevitably Charlotte chooses. The party scene proper starts with a strangely composed high-angle shot of the elegant guests drifting closer to the poolside piano at which Clara is playing. The artificiality of the movements alerts the viewer to the fact that we are seeing this scene as Charlotte sees it. To confirm this, we cut to a shot of her, unseen by the others, on a balcony and wearing the glaringly red dress that's in total contrast to the elegant creams and whites worn by the others. The sequence doesn't, however, end with the expected humiliation of the trusting provincial girl by the visiting sophisticates; instead it finishes with a shot of the dress abandoned as Charlotte, back in jeans and hooped sweater, flees the villa through a circle of luxury cars grouped like guard dogs in the driveway. So much information – but no dialogue apart from the 'bravos' of the guests as they applaud Clara's recital.

FIGURES IN A LANDSCAPE

Born in Paris in 1942, Miller began his professional career making advertising films – almost the automatic apprenticeship for a British director at the time but much rarer in France. Equally untypically for a French director, he served a ten-year apprenticeship behind the camera, working first as an intern on Marcel Carné's *Three Rooms in Manhattan* (1965); then as assistant director to Bresson on *Au hasard Balthazar* (1966), to Demy on *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* (1967) and to Godard on *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1967); and finally as production manager on all of Truffaut's films from *The Wild Child* (1970) to *The Story of Adèle H* (1975).

Miller remained a team player, regularly working with the same crew members: editors Albert Jurgenson (five films) and Véronique Lange (six films) and, above all, production designer Jean-Pierre Kohut-Svelko, whom he had met while working with Truffaut, and who designed nine of his films. "Claude always preferred working in the provinces," says Annie Miller, "because, that way, the crew became a kind of community." When you shoot in Paris, she explains, everyone goes home at the end of the day and the sense of working together is lost.

But the countryside is never just a neutral background to Miller's films. The glorious, sun-drenched Breton coastline of *La Petite Lili* (2003); the chalet up a winding road in the mountains which is Gérard Depardieu's lair in the 1976 Patricia Highsmith adaptation *This Sweet Sickness* (*Dites-lui que je l'aime*); the mountains (again) that haunt young Nicolas's morbid fantasies in *Class Trip* (*La Classe de neige*, 1998); the idyllic countryside in which the less-than-idyllic *colonie de vacances* is located in *The Best Way to Walk* (*La Meilleure Façon de marcher*, 1976); the sleepy Savoie town in *An Impudent Girl*; the shady Bordeaux *landes* in *Thérèse Desqueyroux*; and above all the lush landscapes of Creuze and Indre that make up the setting for *A Secret* (*Un secret*, 2007) – these are all areas of great natural beauty that resonate through the films almost like a reproach for the imperfections of the human inhabitants. It's a style at once classic and postmodern, which could also be seen as a Miller trademark.

His first real film as a director was a 33-minute *moyen métrage* called *Camille ou La Comédie catastrophique* (1971), with 1970s French screen icon Juliet Berto in the title role. Starting out semi-realistic, the film plays for most of the time like an exploration of what a silent movie might be like if the characters talked, before taking a vertiginous plunge into grand guignol. Miller is clearly experimenting, particularly with the abrupt changes in tone that recur in other early films. Most notable here is the exaggerated comic style of actor Claude Piéplu, who plays the pompous camp director in *The Best Way to Walk* (in a scene clearly shot by someone who's seen Ken Loach's *Kes*) and the irascible landlord in *This Sweet Sickness* – both characters at variance with the broadly serious tone of the films in which they appear. Jean-Claude Brial, gleefully overacting as Clara's ebullient manager in *An Impudent Girl*, is another example, while both *Mortelle randonnée* and the 2001 Ruth Rendell adaptation *Betty Fisher and Other Stories* (*Betty Fisher et autres histoires*) repeatedly introduce moments of unexpected humour.

But *Camille* is very much an apprentice work and it was another five years before Miller made *The Best Way to Walk*, a feature debut that's right up there with *Badlands* as an example of a first film of astonishing assurance. Perverse and unpredictable, it tells of the rivalry and growing sexual tension between two *moniteurs* in a *colonie de vacances* (the nearest English-language equivalent

BEHIND THE MASK
'Class Trip', below left, and the Ruth Rendell adaptation 'Betty Fisher and Other Stories', below right, show Miller's ability to infuse everyday settings with suspense and unease



RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE (3)/KOBAL COLLECTION (3)

MURDER IN MIND

Audrey Tautou talks about working with Claude Miller and the complex character she inhabited for his last film

Interview by Nick James

Nick James: What attracted you to play the part of Mauriac's classic literary heroine, Thérèse Desqueyroux?

Audrey Tautou: I really like the contradictions in Thérèse – that she's very obedient and, in another way, a very independent, spirited person. I also like the contrast between her fragility and this harshness that she has. She's a very ambiguous character.

NJ: Did you read the novel beforehand?

AT: Yes. Claude [Miller] sent me the novel before he wrote the script. He wanted to know if I would be interested – and, before you know it, we started working.

NJ: Do you think Thérèse ever really thought she was going to kill somebody?

AT: No. She was not a born criminal. It was this family's society that made her a poisoner. But what I like in the movie is the fact that we can't judge her because we don't pigeonhole her. Claude Miller had the cleverness to let the audience have their own idea of her.

NJ: How did you find the murder in your heart?

AT: When you are suffocating and that's the only exit door you can see, it's a question of survival. Thérèse has a curiosity about what's going to happen tomorrow. She needs to know where's it gonna lead her and when something is gonna happen.

NJ: I'm always intrigued when I talk to an actor who has to convey so much without being very facially expressive.

AT: I wasn't really aware of that. I was unconscious of having such a stern face. But Thérèse is always thinking and she knew that she mustn't talk [about her feelings] because nobody would understand her, or listen to her. She understood that she had to shut up. But just because she's not talking doesn't mean she's not thinking – that's how I wanted to play her.

NJ: What runs through your mind as you're trying to project these thoughts?

AT: For the first time in my career I wrote in the margin of my script every thought going through her head for each moment. I learned these thoughts as I was learning the text. That was another reason I liked this part, because all those secrets make her mysterious; maybe the audience should have some difficulty in getting to know her because Thérèse doesn't really know herself. She's not clear about what she wants. She's a little bit out of focus.



Scene from a marriage: Thérèse (Audrey Tautou) prepares a treat for husband Bernard (Gilles Lelouche)

NJ: Do you think she's somebody who changes personality depending on who she's with?

AT: There are some people with whom she can be herself and say what she thinks. With the rest of the family she just has to hide her true feelings. But I don't think she has multiple personalities.

NJ: When she's with Jean Azevedo [Stanley Weber], the lover of her sister-in-law Anne, Thérèse relaxes and fantasises about having a relationship with him. Then, with her husband, she sometimes behaves as though she could almost love him. It's as if she's not sure herself who she is.

AT: Yes, but with Jean Azevedo she starts to feel she can be who she [really] is. He tells her, "In a year you will escape. You can't live this life." He's the only one who sees that in her. With her husband she tries to play the part as best she can, but there's a moment beyond which she can't make the effort. She thinks, "My god, he's just an idiot. It's hopeless."

NJ: Because she's far more intelligent than she seems, and she's not allowed to be intelligent?

AT: Yes, and she has enough distance from the family to see how mean and stupid they are. I remember one thing Claude Miller told me about the scene when the family has just realised what she's done. I wondered if she didn't feel a little bit guilty, because I would feel guilty. I asked Claude and he said, "Oh no no no no no, she has no pity for the idiots!" That's why at the end Thérèse looks at Anne and realises that she – the one person in the family she loved – will become like all the others. She feels no sadness. Thérèse has a

better sense of what's important than the people who are telling her what she should do. That's why she's not the monster in this story. But she's also not a movie heroine, because a movie heroine is always kind.

NJ: And they don't murder people?

AT: They do murder people, but only very bad people. Thérèse is a human being who has difficulty understanding her own intentions. In the testimony of people on trial for murder, their intentions are sometimes not that clear. It's very difficult to understand the motivation to murder but that's what crime victims always want. Most of the time, at the end of a trial, the victims say, "Well, we didn't get the answer." And that's because sometimes there is no answer. That's the cleverness and particularity of Claude Miller – he has a very singular way of telling a story.

NJ: Are there other particular moments of direction you remember?

AT: Claude could enhance your ideas with just one small remark. He was so precise and clever that he knew how to talk to every actor and for each one he has a different vocabulary. He was a discreet, shy and reserved person and he always directed us by talking quietly in the ear. That gave us huge confidence.

NJ: If he had a different way of approaching each actor, how did he approach you?

AT: He gave me the responsibility of playing the part very early in the process and let me act without telling me almost anything. I thought Claude would be very directorly with me, but in fact he let me do my work.

NJ: He trusted you.

AT: Yeah, but he trusted all the actors he had chosen. He wanted me to be confident and responsible for my part.

NJ: Was he well during the shoot?

AT: No, he was in treatment and we didn't know he would be leaving us so quickly after – not much more than six months. ☹

I asked Claude if Thérèse felt a little bit guilty and he said, 'Oh no no no no no, she has no pity for the idiots!'

Like the great American auteur directors, idolised but only occasionally emulated by the 'Cahiers' generation, Miller knew better than most how to find the moral heart of a story



➡ would be counsellors at an American summer camp): the sensitive and artistic Philippe and the charismatic and sporty Marc, played respectively by Patrick Bouchitey and Patrick Dewaere (the Oliver Reed of French cinema, who committed suicide in 1982 at the age of 35).

The film that followed, *This Sweet Sickness*, was not a commercial success and it took Miller five years to get to *Garde à vue* (1981), a tense police procedural about a cop interrogating a lawyer suspected of murder, starring veteran hard man Lino Ventura and Michel Serrault. (It was remade in 1999 as *Under Suspicion*, with Morgan Freeman as the cop and Gene Hackman as the suspect.) *Garde à vue* was followed by another detective story, *Mortelle randonnée*, co-written by the father-and-son team of Michel and Jacques Audiard from the novel *The Eye of the Beholder* by Marc Behm, a Paris-based American writer best known for his work on the classic 1963 caper movie *Charade*. It's probably Miller's most audacious film, centred around a cat-and-mouse game between Isabelle Adjani as a serial killer with many names and disguises and Michel Serrault as a down-at-heel private detective who fantasises that Adjani's character is, in fact, his long-lost daughter. By turns anarchic, camp and brutal, *Mortelle*

randonnée is a high-wire act that adheres to the book's self-conscious shifts of tone, more aware that it is a film than any of Miller's more recent movies. It was, he later said, a form of stylistic experiment he rather regretted.

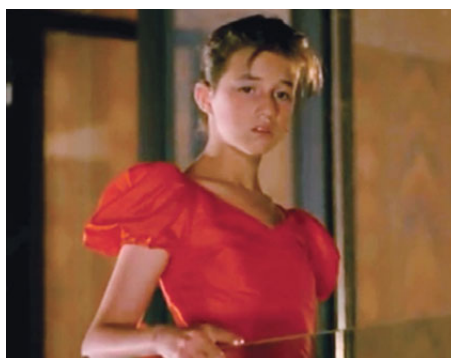
Indeed, none of his subsequent features – including the two wartime stories *L'Accompagnatrice* (1992) and *A Secret; Of Woman and Magic* (*La Chambre des magiciennes*, 2000), an exquisite character study set in a hospital ward, adapted from a Siri Hustvedt novel and shot low-budget on mini-DV for pan-European cultural channel Arte; and *I'm Glad My Mother Is Alive*, a gritty tale of a young man seeking his birth mother, co-written and co-directed with his son Nathan – shows quite the same stylistic exuberance. One possible exception is *Class Trip*, which visualises with generic delight the nightmares of death and abandonment dreamed by 12-year-old Nicolas on his ill-fated school trip. “Can you make something come true just by thinking it?” Nicolas asks a sympathetic teacher. The answer turns out to be no – but only because Nicolas fails to anticipate something far worse, which duly happens.

THE HUMILIATION GAME

Miller consistently brought a subversive sense of humour and a classic rigour to the many and varied projects in his long career as a director. Two of those words, classic and varied, probably do much to account for the critical neglect: we prefer edgy and consistent. Like Hitchcock, the director whose influence hangs over his early work, Miller was a master of point of view – particularly of telling a story from one character's perspective, then suddenly reversing it. Like the great American auteur directors, idolised but only occasionally emulated by the *Cahiers* generation, he knew better than most how to find the moral heart of a story whatever its setting. This remains as true of *The Best Way to Walk* as it is, 36 years later, of *Thérèse Desqueyroux*.

It's this ability to get inside a character that makes Miller's handling of the recurrent theme of humiliation in his work so unnerving. *Betty Fisher*, in particular, with its multiple stories, is a web of indignities: the young Betty is humiliated by her mother Margot, François by his girlfriend Carole, while the hapless conman Alex is put down by almost everybody. In *Class Trip*, Nicolas is triply humiliated: by his sportier classmates for being a wimp; by the fact that his father drives off with his suitcase, forcing him to borrow a pair of pyjamas; and by his terror of wetting the bed. In *The Best Way to Walk*, Philippe is deeply humiliated when Marc discovers him dressed as a woman, and again when he tries to resolve the situation. In *La Petite Lili*, Julien – just like Kolya in

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER
Above: 'Mortelle randonnée';
below, left to right: Patrick
Dewaere in 'The Best Way to
Walk', Charlotte Gainsbourg
in 'An Impudent Girl';
'L'Accompagnatrice'



CORRÈS (GABRIEL NATIONAL ARCHIVE (OPHOTOPOSTNVC))

Chekhov's *The Seagull*, on which the film is based – is humiliated in front of everyone by his mother's reaction to his work (in Kolya's case a play, in Julien's a film, both ironically presented juvenilia). And two films – *An Impudent Girl* and *A Secret* – begin with almost identical scenes set at a swimming pool as Charlotte in the former and the young François in the latter are humiliated because of their lack of athletic skill; Charlotte by her classmates, François by his father's indifference. So acute and uncomfortable are the two scenes that it's hard not to believe that the director himself suffered something similar at a swimming pool as a child.

For all the classicism of his approach, Miller also had a flair for knowing when to disrupt the seamless flow of the narrative and when to allow the professional to take second place to the cinéaste – in particular to the admirer of Hitchcock. Which brings us back to *This Sweet Sickness*: it's easy to see what drew Miller to Patricia Highsmith's most disturbing novel, about a man's obsession with a childhood sweetheart. The calm logic with which Highsmith draws us inside the head of the book's central character David tricks us into going along with him just a little too far for comfort. No coincidence, either, that Miller's idol had made that other great Highsmith adaptation, *Strangers on a Train*.

In his take on the novel Miller keeps the focus on David, a French businessman living in a drab provincial town where it always seems to be raining; at key times, the film adopts his point of view. David is not especially likeable but, being played by the young Gérard Depardieu, he easily holds our attention. At first Miller focuses on the banality of everyday provincial life, with occasional hints of derangement; an early run-of-the-mill shot of the object of David's obsession, Lise (Dominique Laffin), travelling on a bus is subtly reframed to reveal that we're seeing her through the windscreen of David's car as he stalks her. Later, however, the film tips into outright delirium with a final sequence set (yet again) in a swimming pool, this time an indoor one. It's here that David abducts Lise, dressing her in her bridal gown to fulfil the final act of his devotion. He does so by dragging her suddenly into a changing cubicle, putting his hand over her mouth and slamming the door shut. At this point, the film throws classicism out of the window. Zooming in on the locked door from the other side of the pool, Miller lets the sweet sickness have full rein and the everyday world of observed reality slips into the timelessness of obsession.

There's a similar moment of disruption in *Betty Fisher* when the infant Joseph falls from his bedroom window. We don't see Joseph actually fall (there is none of the infuriating slow-mo of von Trier's *Antichrist*). Instead, we follow his grandmother Margot outside into the garden, the camera gliding at ground level across the wet decking before moving out briefly to frame her on the lawn, then – as she heads inside – tracking back again at ground level across a slightly different part of the decking until Joseph's body is revealed. It's a moment of horror all the more effective for being so understated. But there's more. The scene is preceded by one in which Margot, a monster figure for most of the film (we first see her stabbing the young Betty on a train with a pair of scissors), has seemed to soften, apologising with apparent sincerity for being such a bad mother. But her reac-



tion to finding the body – not shock, not even surprise, just a blank, disinterested stare – irretrievably reasserts her monster status, with that sinuous tracking shot very much part of the process.

TILL DEATH DO US PART
Thérèse (Audrey Tautou) and Bernard (Gilles Lelouche) survey the property that brought them together in 'Thérèse Desqueyroux'

RETURN TO THE SOURCE

Thérèse Desqueyroux was, of course, never intended to be Miller's last film. Visually sumptuous, thematically grim and morally complex with great performances all round it is (unless one counts Chekhov in *La Petite Lili*) the only time Miller has tackled an established literary classic: the 1927 novel by François Mauriac. But if it is in many ways unlike the director's other films, it's a striking example of Miller the great adapter.

Mauriac's tortured Catholicism permeates the story of a spirited young provincial woman in 1920s France who agrees to a marriage that will unite two families owning large adjacent lands. But she finds the result oppressive and, almost on a whim, poisons her husband Bernard (Gilles Lelouche) by upping his daily dose of arsenic (regularly prescribed in small doses at the time for a variety of complaints). Bernard survives, Thérèse is tried, but the charges are dropped. Bernard takes her back for the sake of appearances, but confines her to her room.

From even that brief summary, it's easy to see how complex a novel it is; different readers have seen it either as a study in feminine rebellion or as an examination of sin and the forgiveness that washes it away. Being Jewish and not especially interested in religion, Miller seems to lean towards the former interpretation but allows us to decide by capturing the novel's suffocating nature and focusing our attention on Tautou, perfectly cast in the title role. It's an adaptation that brings to the screen intact all the complexity and ambiguity of its source.

In the end, *Thérèse Desqueyroux* may not be quite what one would have looked for as the summation of a remarkable career. But as a demonstration of Miller's way of working – teasing out the strands of an adaptation and transferring them to the screen with, if anything, greater complexity than in the text – it will more than suffice.



'Thérèse Desqueyroux' is released in the UK on 7 June, and is reviewed on page 108

FEAR EATS THE SOUL

Reuniting the two lead actors from 'A Prophet', 'Our Children' is a fictionalisation of a real-life child-murder case that shocked Belgium. But instead of exploiting the tabloid potential of the story, writer-director Joachim Lafosse saw it in terms of Greek tragedy

By Thomas Dawson

Inspired by a Belgian multiple-infanticide case from 2007 in which a teacher, Geneviève Lhermitte, was given a life sentence for the murder of her five children while her husband was in Morocco, writer-director Joachim Lafosse's *Our Children* (*À perdre la raison*) forcefully illustrates Jean Renoir's celebrated dictum, "The awful thing about life is this: everyone has their reasons." In one of his earlier films *Private Property* (*Nue propriété*, 2006), Lafosse cast Isabelle Huppert alongside the Renier brothers, who played two siblings furious at their divorced mother's plans to sell the family home. Here he pairs Emilie Dequenne – previously seen in the Dardenne brothers' *Rosetta* (1999) and André Téchiné's 2009 *La Fille du RER* (another film based on a shocking real-life incident) – opposite Jacques Audiard's two male leads from *A Prophet* (2009), Tahar Rahim and Niels Arestrup.

The film begins with a distraught Murielle (Dequenne) in a hospital bed. "Will they be buried in Morocco?" she asks, as tiny coffins are loaded onto an aeroplane. Lafosse then flashes back several years to a radiant Murielle falling in love with the handsome Mounir (Rahim), who lives with his French adoptive father Dr Pinget (Arestrup). It is the doctor who suggests the couple stay on with him as newlyweds and only later, after quickly falling pregnant, does Murielle



discover the control her seemingly benevolent father-in-law exerts over her new husband.

Dequenne has won justifiable plaudits for her extraordinary portrayal of an initially effervescent woman sinking into a catastrophic depression, but credit must also go to Lafosse, who eschews sensationalism through his astute direction and carefully controlled *mise en scène*. His focus on a harrowing family tragedy nevertheless opens up broader questions around entrenched patriarchal attitudes, the treatment of mental illness and the psychological legacy of colonialism.

Thomas Dawson: Why did the title change from the French 'À perdre la raison' to the English 'Our Children'?

Joachim Lafosse: The choice of *Our Children* for the English-language title was that of the international sales people. It was actually the very first title we had for the film in French. I liked this title because the kids in the story seemed like casualties in a war and they seem to belong to every character: to the mother Murielle, to the father Mounir and to the doctor Pinget, who says to Mounir, "Look at everything I have done for you all." In the end I felt it was a bit vague in French.

TD: What was the starting point for the film?

JL: Five years ago I was driving and on the radio I heard about this real-life story of a mother – a teacher called

It would be vulgar and disgusting, in my opinion, to make a suspense film about a story like this – it's a Greek tragedy and it's important to establish that from the start

Geneviève Lhermitte – who had killed her five children, one by one by cutting their throats, before attempting to commit suicide. I was about to become a father. I talked about it to my family and friends, and everyone agreed that what this woman did was unthinkable, unimaginable. I followed the case on the television, on the radio and in the papers and I was frightened at how everyone was in the process of creating a monster. It's strange: in every country I visit with the film, people say, "We [too] had a shocking case and the media made the perpetrator out to be a monster." I couldn't bear this process. With my co-writers, Matthieu Reynaert and Thomas Bidegain [*Rust and Bone*], I sat down and tried to write a script that made what this woman did more imaginable and perhaps more understandable.

I wasn't interested in telling the factual truth about what happened or showing the reality of what she did. For me cinema is never about the 'one' truth. People have asked me what is and what isn't true in the film. I can't really answer that, because it's a pure fiction. It would be vulgar and disgusting, in my opinion, to make a suspense film about a story like this. It's a Greek tragedy and it's important to establish that from the beginning. We also decided right from the outset that we would not show the murder of the children. We did not



EYE OF THE STORM
Murielle (Emilie Dequenne, left) and her husband Mounir (Tahar Rahim) in 'Our Children', the new film from Belgian director Joachim Lafosse, right



PHOTOGRAPHY BY FABRIZIO MALTESE

want to descend into sensationalism and gore; we wanted to lead the viewer to reflect. Those were our rules. At the trial of Geneviève Lhermitte, it was established that when she committed the murder she was in a psychotic state, which authorises everything. But people forget that, before descending into that state, she was a woman. We tried to show that through the character of Murielle.

As in all great tragedies, it starts with a passionate love, but the road to hell is paved with good intentions. The subject that really interested me was the loss of freedom for this young couple Murielle and Mounir, and how power was exerted over them by the doctor. What you have, in effect, is neocolonialism. The character that actually touched me the most was Mounir; he is the most damaged, in a way, because he is torn between being grateful for the generosity of his benefactor and the desire of his wife to escape from that benefactor's influence. What I also liked was that I had the opportunity to film the meeting between two different cultures without judging them. There's a scene where Murielle and her children visit Morocco and she is very affectionate with her grandmother – and that says a lot about her.

TD: In the West labels like 'psychotic', 'schizophrenic' and 'neo-Nazi' explain away the actions of others. It means we can say, "They're mad and we're not like that."

JL: Exactly. That's why I spent five years working on this. I can't stand this reliance on psychological labels. I am not denying that she was in a psychotic state when she carried out the murders, but to me it isn't simply genetic. A number of factors and circumstances combine to make somebody behave like that; there is an individual fragility and there is a system she exists in – and people don't want to see that.

TD: 'Our Children' reminds me of certain Fassbinder films, in the way that individuals – Maria in 'The Marriage of Maria Braun' or Emmi the cleaning lady in 'Fear Eats the Soul' – serve as metaphors for wider German society.

JL: Before making my film I rewatched lots of Fassbinder films. The trial of Geneviève Lhermitte was a fiasco. It frightened me that nobody seemed capable of seeing the power of the doctor in this story, the difficulty the Mounir character had resisting this man, and the consequences for his wife and family. People wanted to deny it was anything to do with neocolonialism. The doctor pays for the house, the car, the holidays, the kids' clothes and he's the husband's boss: one has to ask why he is doing all this. People would tell me that he had good intentions. The question for me to ask is: what is for the better and what is for the worse? What's scary is that the bad came out of the good: good intentions lead to the tragedy. It's like the Jean Renoir quote that everyone has his or her reasons – and that is the most terrible thing in the world. I want the spectator to watch a film of my mine and to be vigilant. That's why I included Scarlatti's music. It's not to make people cry but to get them to watch out.

TD: Why did you use this particular combination of actors?

JL: When I saw Tahar and Niels in *A Prophet* there was a latent homosexuality in the relationship between their characters that I thought was brilliant. When I finished the script for *Our Children*, I said to myself that basically this is the story of a young woman who meets a young man who is already attached to another man. I thought it would be interesting to throw Emilie into this situa-



This time round I decided I'd stop the aesthetic dogmatism and formal showing off; as a viewer I actually prefer the films of actors to those of directors

tion, opposite the two great actors who'd been together in *A Prophet*. At the beginning she was scared of not being at their level. What I found was that, for the first time in my directing career, working with these actors was like being a viewer of my own film, because they really seized these characters. Niels in particular isn't an easy actor to direct. He has such powerful charisma – after I met him I was practically trembling for five minutes and that has never happened to me before.

For Emilie there was something very personal about this film because she's a mother. At the beginning of our work together she didn't talk much about her own life. As research she worked with a psychiatrist who specialises in post-natal depression, which she said was very useful. We shot for ten weeks in all. In the second week, we shot the scene where she is all alone in the car and it breaks down. I knew then that we were away.

TD: Can you tell me about your visual approach to the film?

JL: Because of the long, controlled takes, people have compared the style of my previous films *Private Property* and *Elève libre* [2008] to those of Michael Haneke. This time round I said to myself that I'd stop the aesthetic dogmatism, the formal showing off and really film these actors and their characters. Actually, as a viewer, I prefer the films of actors to those of directors.

TD: Belgium seems to have more than its share of impressive actors at the moment: Olivier Gourmet, Matthias Schoenaerts, Emilie Dequenne, Déborah François, Cécile De France.

JL: And we only make 20 films a year! Partly it's because we have very good film schools. Our actors aren't regarded as film stars but as actors who work in theatre and film and who are very pragmatic. There's a parallel there with British actors who have a theatre background, who are very disciplined in their work and not at all temperamental. Godard described Jean-Paul Belmondo as the acting equivalent of a faithful dog – and he meant that as a compliment. If you told him: "Open the door, cross the room and open the window," that's exactly what he would do, without discussing all the reasons why his character was doing those things. It's about an instinctive rather than an intellectual approach.



'Our Children' is released in the UK on 10 May, and is reviewed on page 106

PROPHETIC DUO
Niels Arestrup, left, as the controlling Dr Pinget, with Tahar Rahim as his adoptive son Mounir



LastExitToNowhere.com



@LASTEXITshirts Find us on FACEBOOK

TONY GARNETT

Think of anything thematically or stylistically groundbreaking in the last 50 years of British TV drama and the chances are Tony Garnett had a hand in it. From single television plays that outraged the establishment in the 1960s and 70s to era-defining series in the 1990s, the producer has brought to the screen an uncompromising body of work that's now the subject of a BFI Southbank season. **Interview by Mark Duguid**

Tony Garnett was born in Birmingham in 1936 into a 'respectable' upper-working-class family "with a trade in their fingers". An early beneficiary of the new grammar schools, he became an actor, partly supported by a scholarship to study psychology at UCL. After screen credits including *An Age of Kings* (1960), *Dixon of Dock Green* (1955-76), *Z Cars* (1962-78) and the feature film *The Boys* (1962) he turned to production, joining the team of the BBC's groundbreaking drama anthology *The Wednesday Play* (1964-70). He quickly became one of British television's most influential producers.

In the mid-1960s, Garnett fought hard to free BBC drama from the television studio and take 16mm cameras on to the streets; throughout that decade and the next he helped shape some of the screen's most combative, radical drama, in partnership with writers like Jim Allen, David Mercer and G.F. Newman, and directors like Les Blair, Roland Joffé and Ken Loach. His long association with Loach embraced the epochal *Up the Junction* (1965), *Cathy Come Home* (1966) and *The Big Flame* (1969), the feature film *Kes* (1969) and the incendiary 1975 four-parter *Days of Hope*, which charted events leading up to the 1926 General Strike. Similarly contentious work in the 1970s included two television dramas from 1978: *The Spongers* (written by Allen, directed by Joffé), a harrowing dramatisation of the effect of benefit cuts, and *Law and Order* (written by Newman, directed by Blair), which asserted endemic corruption in the Metropolitan Police. His consistently provocative approach led to frequent conflicts with BBC managers, sections of the press and 'clean-up TV' campaigner Mary Whitehouse. He remains an outspoken critic of contemporary television management.

In 1980 Garnett directed his first feature film *Prostitute*, set in Birmingham; he subsequently moved to the US where he directed his second feature *Handgun* (1982), and remained as a producer through most of the 80s. Back in the UK in 1990, he set up his own independent

production company, Island World (later World Productions), achieving critical and popular success with the television series *Between the Lines* (1992-94), *Cardiac Arrest* (1994), *This Life* (1996-97) and *The Cops* (1998). This month BFI Southbank launches a two-month celebration of his exceptional 50-year contribution to television and film.

Mark Duguid: How did you get started in television?

Tony Garnett: I was a jobbing actor, a very lucky actor, because I was fashionable. Probably just two parts really: neurotic CND undergraduate or Teddy Boy; with glasses or without! I was doing OK but I knew I was third or fourth choice. If they couldn't get Albert Finney or Tom Courtenay they might think of me. I did a television play called *Catherine*, written by Roger Smith, and Ken Loach directed it. I didn't see much of Ken – he was so worried about knitting and pearling the cables and going from one camera to the other. But I did get to know Roger and Jim [MacTaggart].

ON TONY GARNETT

"Simply the best television drama creator and producer there has been."

Former BBC Director General Mark Thompson

"I owe Tony a great deal. I think we were quite a good team. We had a lot in common in terms of our ideas and our approach to what was important, but Tony had skills and talents that I certainly didn't have, and he was able to make space for the films to happen at the BBC. He was very good at meeting with writers, bringing them along, and being both enthusiastic and constructive about what they wrote."

Ken Loach, in 'Loach on Loach' (1998)

Roger started to persuade me to come and work with them. Sydney Newman [then BBC head of drama] had asked them to start *The Wednesday Play*. I was reluctant for a long time. If you're acting in a good piece with good people it's – not quite as good as sex, nothing's as good as sex – but it is the most wonderful feeling. I realised that I'd miss acting, but not the life of an actor. And because the BBC was opening itself up, we had a chance to do interesting stuff.

MD: What kind of an institution was the BBC you found yourself in during the early 1960s?

TG: There were big, big social changes going on. I suppose you could say that [Director General] Hugh Greene was getting Auntie to leave off the corset and put on a miniskirt. It was posh and civil service-y, but there was also a bit of fresh air coming in. They were taking people in off the streets: rough lads like us.

MD: You were the first generation of the grammar-school educated working class entering the BBC. Did you feel you were storming the citadel?

TG: Yes, we probably did – self-importantly, romantically – think that. There was a whole group of us: Smith and me, Troy Kennedy Martin, John McGrath, working-class kids who'd gone through the grammar-school-to-university route. That of course is very interesting because we were de-classed. I think those tensions affected our work.

MD: You've described BBC management at the time as a form of "benign neglect". Did you feel you had a lot of freedom at the time?

TG: Well, no, because we were always wanting more. When I started producing I said, "I want to produce films." I wanted to go out on real locations. That blimped 16mm camera was there and they were using it in documentaries, and there was a political as well as an aesthetic reason to go out on location. And the BBC said no. The biggest professional fight I'd ever had was to get permission to make films.

In the end, with Sydney Newman's





 support, [BBC controller] Michael Peacock said, "You can do a couple."

MD: There was a very political set emerging in BBC drama in the late 1960s. How did that develop?

TG: At that time Ken wasn't political. He was a liberal-minded aesthete, really. Politics was in the air because of Wilson's government, which everybody thought was too right-wing – goodness me, now! We wanted to do a film [*The Big Flame*] about a strike on the docks with the dockers taking over the docks and declaring a *soviet*. But we wanted to base it on a real strike. Jim Allen and [actor and ex-docker] Peter Kerrigan said, "There's a man in London – his name's Gerry Healy [leader of the Workers Revolutionary Party]," and he was very helpful.

In the meantime Clive Goodwin, who was an agent, and I were saying, "We need a forum." I was very political but I was not happy with any political organisation. So I said, "We'll put the word out and we'll have a political meeting at my place, everybody's welcome." We put it out to Labour people we knew. Tariq Ali, Ken Tynan would come. Sometimes we'd have 70 or 80 people packed into my place. And Gerry Healy turned up; within a few weeks he'd dominated the whole meeting and the other groups weren't coming any more and he'd started to recruit. He didn't recruit me but he recruited some of my friends. And it got more and more serious.

MD: You're also associated with encouraging experiment and innovation with Loach, but also with Mike Leigh, Les Blair and others.

TG: Ken and I were just so close politically and in our ambitions. I suppose I grew with him and he grew with me. It was different with Mike and Les. They asked me to go and see [Leigh's] film, *Bleak Moments* [1971]. There was hardly anybody in there and it was a pretty bleak film. I just fancied something about these kids. I thought they were working very differently to the way I've ever worked. I surrounded them with good people. And then [I said]: "Bloom. Do what you do."

MD: That resulted in Leigh's 'Hard Labour' and Blair's 'Blooming Youth', both for 'Play for Today' in 1973.

TG: Yes. I was in the club having a drink, and [head of Serials] Gerald Savory came in and he said, "What are you up to?" – this is my boss! And I said I was producing a couple of films and he said, "How interesting, who's written them?" I said, "Er, nobody, they're gonna be improvised." "Oh, how interesting," he said, "and the directors?" I said, "They're just two kids." He was a bit thoughtful by then: "Oh, well... jolly good luck." That summed up the very best of the BBC.

MD: The blurring of fact and fiction in drama has been a running battle throughout your career. What made that so infuriating and terrifying for critics and managers?

TG: It's political. But they won't admit that so they erect all sorts of aesthetic arguments and 'the trust of the public' that the BBC must retain and stuff like that. We were making dramatic fiction and never pretended anything else. We billed a screenwriter, against each character was an actor's name. But the News & Current Affairs people wanted drama to look like drama, traditional drama. We were crossing a line. I used to say to

them, "We make fiction and tell the truth – our truth. It's the only truth we know. You deal in facts and tell lies." That didn't go down too well.

MD: You started as an actor, but your work has often taken an unorthodox approach to casting and performance.

TG: The best director I've ever worked with in terms of actors' performance is Ken, without a doubt. Ken and I would go around the working-man's clubs and cast the comedians, because they had the comic timing. Then, on the location, first of all you keep the paraphernalia away, then you shoot and shoot and shoot. No actor can ever do anything wrong. Ever. It's an act of enormous courage that should be rewarded with love and thanks. They may offer you things that are not appropriate, but you only need one take. So Ken, after each take, he says, "Very good – let's do that once more."

All I've done really, all my life, is love good work out of people. If you create that atmosphere, within a framework of professional discipline, then people relax and do better work than they ever thought they could.

MD: The abortion debate has moved on since 'Up the Junction' but the social problems described in 'Cathy Come Home' are still very much with us. How do you feel now about drama's capacity to provoke change?

TG: In the optimism and the arrogance of youth, I thought we could make a film and change the world. And clearly we couldn't. It's not what films do anyway. They might 'raise consciousness', but you don't change the world. *Cathy Come Home* and *The Spongers* now, really you would expect them to be of occasional interest to film students or archivists. But, particularly with

I didn't like directing; good directors are obsessives and I couldn't stand working on just one thing. I was bored silly



Children and animals: Tony Garnett, right, with young lead David Bradley on location for 'Kes'



1965: 'Up the Junction'

these welfare cuts, they are contemporary films. And that is shameful. There are more homeless this year than there were in 1966 when we made *Cathy*. And *The Spongers*, that family, are just exactly what's happening now – but worse.

MD: It's striking that a lot of radical TV drama from the late 1960s to the early 1980s seems to target the mainstream Left as much as the establishment and the Right.

TG: The criticism of the Labour Party, that it safely delivers the working class to the establishment, is just historically obvious and they're well assisted by the trade-union bureaucracy. That's one reason why we did *Days of Hope*. But the small groups to the left of the Labour Party don't get any purchase, often for good reason. We're in a country that is very sophisticated politically. We have a very sophisticated ruling class. We have various means of allowing and then dissipating radical energy. We have a press which is owned by billionaires and large corporations, and a population which – although it sometimes rises up in anger – is not directed politically and most of the rest of the time is phlegmatic, and a middle class which still feels it has a lot to lose, and enough of a working class with aspiration.

The tide has been running against the Left since 1979. But you just wonder now whether there isn't going to be an opportunity of some kind. I think I'm quite a political moderate, really. I've



1966: 'Cathy Come Home'

always reluctantly voted Labour. But as soon as I saw Blair I knew that the Labour Party, which has always sold out, had been taken over by Tories. I couldn't easily vote Labour then and certainly [not] after Iraq. But who else do you vote for? They don't say they are socialists but the Greens, apart from arguably being right about the biggest question, are very sound about a lot of other stuff. So I would vote Green now, unless voting Green might let the Tories in.

MD: 'Kes' was quite different in tone and style from your work with Loach up until then.

TG: I knew as soon as I read [Barry Hines's novel] that we had to make a film of this, because of that powerful central image: that hawk. Tony Richardson got us the money, for which I'll always be grateful, and United Artists put money up, but the budget was tiny so we had a lot of creative freedom. Ken was evolving his style and [DP] Chris Menges was developing his. It was different: it was 35mm, colour – they wouldn't let us shoot black and white. But it almost never got shown. I showed it to the man from UA, and as he walked out he said to me, "I would have preferred Hungarian"! He couldn't understand a word of it. The distributor here refused to put it out. Finally another distributor put it out in five cinemas in Yorkshire and it broke the house record in every one, so then it came to London. They wanted us to do subtitles everywhere south of Nottingham.

MD: You directed your own first feature 'Prostitute' in 1980. Was it a long-standing ambition to direct?

TG: No, the opposite. Everybody kept telling me, "You should be doing this," so in the end I said, "Oh fuck it, I'll do one." I used it to play with all sorts of ideas, mainly to do with performance and confusing the audience about what they were actually watching. But I didn't like directing. I've got a very low boredom threshold. I think good directors are obsessives, and I couldn't stand just working on one thing and I couldn't bear hanging around. I was bored silly.

MD: But you did it again not long after with 'Handgun', in Texas.

TG: Well, I went to America soon afterwards and I wrote another screenplay. And I thought, "I've got the screenplay and it's low-budget, I may as well." It was a very interesting experience being in Texas at that time but, again, I had the same feeling. The editing was quite interesting and I liked working with the actors, but the process... it's not for me.

MD: You stayed through most of the 1980s in Hollywood, working on some quite uncharacteristic titles – including 'Sesame Street Presents Follow That Bird' (1985).



1978: 'The Spongers'

TG: By the end of the 70s I was absolutely exhausted with all the battles here, and enormously disappointed politically. I just wanted to get away, to refresh myself. During the 60s and 70s there was quite a lively independent world in America. So I went to LA, and of course I missed Thatcher and walked into Reagan. The independent film thing didn't close down but it was very difficult. And all Hollywood wanted to make were big-budget shoot-'em-ups. Well ideologically I couldn't work on a movie like that and anyway I wouldn't know how to. They asked me to do the *Sesame Street* movie. I thought it would be fun. And it was a nightmare. The Children's Television Workshop thought they were being raped by Hollywood and Hollywood thought they were dealing with a bunch of New York liberal amateurs. But my little boy got to meet Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch.



1980: 'Prostitute'

MD: Did you gain much else from your time in America?

TG: It was painful in some ways because, suddenly, it was, "Tony who?" Our films were wine that didn't travel. So I literally started again, and it was like a cold shower. But it was very good for me. Hollywood is full of psychopaths – functioning, legal psychopaths, which is entertaining but dangerous to watch – but it's also full of such talented people.

MD: What was it like coming back at the start of the 1990s?

TG: I came back to a different Britain. I didn't want to work in the art film world here. The BBC was in a sulk over [restructuring by Director General John] Birt, it was a very unhappy place. And then John Heyman, who was a movie financier, asked me to start this production company. So I did.



A villain's tale: Peter Dean as Jack Lynn in the four-part 'Law and Order' (1978)



MD: A new ecosystem of independent production had developed by then.

TG: In the 70s there was a campaign to start independent production, and I sympathised, but I took no part in it. I thought it was a petit-bourgeois diversion. It was no accident that Willie Whitelaw, a canny operator, persuaded Thatcher it would be a very good thing, because it not only conjured up this Tory idea of companies and entrepreneurs but it also made producers crush the unions. Now there are just a handful of suppliers – about the same number of companies in Soho as there would have been with offices in-house at the BBC. No creative benefit I can see. Some have made a few bucks.

MD: You'd been quite disdainful about series in the past, but at World you created a new kind of television series with things like *'Between the Lines'* and *'This Life'*.

TG: Traditionally in renewable series, the rule was there should never be any character development. Columbo is Columbo in exactly the same way in every episode. We tried to develop character over many, many hours. On *Between the Lines*, when [writer] John Wilsher and [script editor] Tim Vaughan came to me and asked if I wanted to do a cop show I said, "No, I don't." I'd done *Law and Order*. They said, "We want to do a cop show in which the police investigate the police." I said, "I'll have it!" *This Life* was a soap – and we had a lot of fun playing with that genre too.

MD: The approach to politics was quite different. These series weren't necessarily unpolitical but they're very different in approach.

TG: The phrase I came up with was 'Trojan horse drama'. I had to deliver what they wanted but within that I could infiltrate my own, or our own, piece. *The Cops*, for instance. I wanted to do a series set on some Northern sink estate that had started to lose its prosperity in the 70s, where all the industries had closed and there was a lot of hopelessness, worklessness, illness and drugs. I wanted to show the other side of Blair's paradise. So we did a cop show. We did the series I wanted to do, inside a cop show. I hired a whole lot of kids, just like I did on *This Life*, and they showed enormous courage. No writer could even begin to write for *The Cops* unless they'd spent a few weeks out with the cops. And they came back with more stories than they could even tell. I enjoyed that show.

MD: You've had your share of run-ins with the police.

TG: On *The Cops*, the Manchester police gave us lots and lots of cooperation, until they saw the first series. And then they gave us none whatsoever! Which is fair enough. My position was: I'm not in the business of producing public relations for Manchester Police. *Law and Order* was different. Outrage – from the press, from the Met, from parliament. Absolute outrage. Then a year or two later the new commissioner, Robert Mark, publicly said that it was his ambition to arrest more criminals than he employed! But by *Between the Lines* the Met had got more sophisticated. So basically the way they spun it was, "Well, of course there's absolutely nothing in this, but it is good entertainment, isn't it?" Which is a nice way to deal with it without confronting what it's saying.



1992: *'Between the Lines'*

MD: There's still some political television drama – Peter Kosminsky, for example – but the character has undeniably changed. Is it a question of opportunities being denied or is there less political work being offered?

TG: I think both really. The BBC responds to the atmosphere in the country and, clearly, the country is different and there's a generation now that's been Thatchered. The problem at the BBC is that [management consultant] McKinsey came in. Their slogan is: "If you can measure it, you can manage it." The problem with a creative enterprise like the BBC is that you *can't* measure it. So you can only manage it by destroying the creativity. But creativity has a way of coming through. You see little flowers coming through a crack in concrete. It's a question again of balance. Drama is dominated by high-volume shows – they're junk food. So the BBC is creatively, culturally poisoning people.

MD: Where do you think British television is heading?

TG: Well, television is over. People are watching

I wanted to do a series set on some Northern sink estate – I wanted to show the other side of Blair's paradise. So we did a cop show



1996: *'This Life'*

a lot of television still, but not on television sets. New technologies are hugely exciting and disruptive. They always are. The BBC should embrace them creatively, not just technically. They should take a small percentage of drama budget and spend it all on the internet, give a chance to a whole generation of kids. Commission all sorts of things and tell them to just excite us. And fail. Try again, fail better. It would be an explosion of people's talents and new ways of telling stories. When I was young the barriers to entry to filmmaking were huge. Now anybody can do it, and that's a socialist's dream, really, that creativity is for everyone.

MD: Your third novel is about to come out. Is this a new career for you? Is there a continuity with your other work?

TG: I've spent 50 years thinking about nothing else but how to tell a story on screen. I was tired of 60-hour weeks, no weekends, crap hotels and I wanted a new challenge and a different pace of life. So now I can spend all morning at the London Library, do a thousand words – or not – and I can tell my story without having to raise millions of pounds or fight executives. But they're all political. They're about love and politics. Life is love and politics, isn't it? ☺

i Tony Garnett appears in person at BFI Southbank, London on 4 June, as part of a season of his work running until 29 June



1998: *'The Cops'*



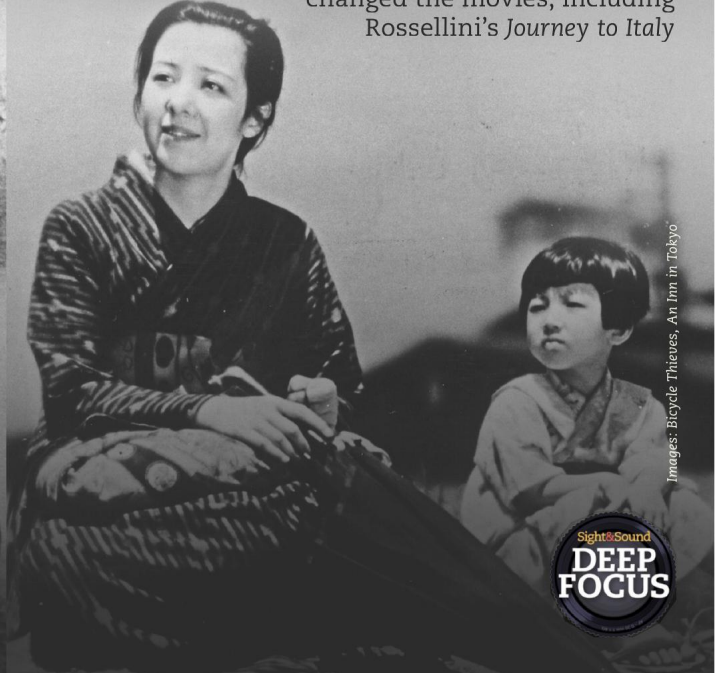
Sight&Sound Deep Focus The Roots of Neorealism

1 May – 6 June

Landmarks from a movement that
changed the movies, including
Rossellini's *Journey to Italy*



BFI SOUTHBANK
London SE1 Waterloo
Tickets 020 7928 3232
bfi.org.uk



Images: Bicycle Thieves, An Inn in Tokyo



B
F
I

GOTHIC
COMING 2013

bfi.org.uk/gothic
#bfigothic

ARTISTS' MOVING IMAGE

FULL STREAM AHEAD

The growth of opportunities to stream film and video online is offering a new generation of artists an alternative exhibition platform

By Nathaniel Budzinski

Recent decades have seen an increase in artists' film and video being shown in galleries but artists have also been moving towards another new exhibition model: the screening – or streaming – of film and video online.

The internet has its own preoccupations and aesthetic forms, currently being explored and defined by a new generation of artists who specifically produce video for – and in reaction to – this context. So what could some of these qualities be – and what relation might they have to such effects as 'content monetisation' or the cultivation of isolated and frantic attention spans?

Current concerns over culture, cash and a perceived sensorial assault upon our selves echo artists' earlier interests in television and broadcast technology during the 1960s and 70s. And as the cultural-economic wilds of the internet become tamed by more rigorous enforcement of copyright and the belated awakening of commercial media outlets to the potential of

online content delivery, the form's situation increasingly resembles that of television, with moral panics and issues over dumbing down and psychological health coming to the fore.

There are many varieties of online distribution. Mark Aerial Waller has used Vimeo – a highbrow YouTube and the streaming channel of choice for many artists and filmmakers – to stream *Time Together* (2012), a series of pseudo-science-educational 'webisodes' that were available temporarily as part of an exhibition. Ben Rivers uses Vimeo to host excerpts of his ethnographic fantasy films, each a few minutes long, acknowledging both the power of public accessibility (read: Google) and the need to titillate cinephiles' desire for exclusivity (although his post-apocalyptic science-fiction film *Slow Action* is available in its entirety at animateprojects.org). Ryan Trecartin has put many of his frenetic, Warhol-superstar-inspired videos online. For a commercially successful artist to make his work freely available to watch online goes against the grain of gallery culture, which is still pragmatically attached to notions of auratic uniqueness (read: money).

It's not just a gift economy; some artists just take. James Richards, winner of the 2012 Jarman Award – a new prize for contemporary moving-image artists – makes work that captures the

spirit of the internet. His anti-narratives, whose subject matter mirrors the internet miasma of music videos, self-shot animal footage and pornography, surely belongs online. But it isn't there: it's only ever shown at screenings or as part of Richards's installations. His fellow 2012 Jarman Award nominee Benedict Drew has a more porous relationship with online video culture. Many of his humorously abrasive videos are viewable online, excerpted from his expanded-cinema installations. Another peer of Richards and Drew, poet and artist Heather Phillipson, uses Vimeo like a sketch pad to upload ideas in development, as well as finished work.

Two London-based artists' collectives, Auto Italia South East and LuckyPDF, have been a consistent source of energetic online activity. Initially working together in 2007, they used vintage analogue video mixers and synthesisers to produce a five-episode series without any external funding. Covering a range of topics – from leashed men wrestling within a circle of

The internet has its own aesthetic forms, currently being explored and defined by a new generation of artists



Team spirit: the work of London-based artists' collectives Auto Italia South East and LuckyPDF has been a consistent source of energetic online activity

fire to giving anarchist academic David Graeber a haircut in exchange for an impromptu lecture – the programmes are made by numerous artists operating under a single moniker. Equal parts public-access programme, light-entertainment variety show and chaotic happening, their first series is inflected with cheesy movie-of-the-week and animated-GIF aesthetics. Core members of Auto Italia cite as influences the television opera work of American composer Robert Ashley and Jef Cornelis's experiments while working at the Dutch-language Belgian channel VRT. With its carnivalesque atmosphere, their work also looks back to earlier experiments like multimedia pioneers Otto Piene and Aldo Tambellini's *Black Gate Cologne* (1969).

The examples of artists' video online are endless, so curation is important. There's been increased art-world interest in television and how artists are responding to mass media, exemplified in museum shows such as Mumok's 'Changing Channels' in Vienna and MACBA's 'Are You Ready for TV?' (both 2010) in Barcelona, alongside a plethora of curated screening programmes. There are online streaming platforms that take the exhibition format as their model: tank.tv, an offshoot of the fashion magazine *Tank*, has been presenting curated shows since 2003, working with artists such as Jeremy Deller, Rosalind Nashashibi and curator Hans Ulrich Obrist. The Space, recently launched as part of the UK's Cultural Olympiad project, hosts a raft of media from across the arts, emulating a catch-all European Kunsthalle approach, albeit in far more cramped environs.

Some institutions have responded to the new digital opportunities by commissioning more focused original content. Since 2011, Channel 4's Random Acts initiative has been commissioning, broadcasting on TV, then streaming artists' work, providing a valuable mainstream showcase. Warsaw Museum of Modern Art's FilMOTEKA is in the process of digitising and streaming around 1,500 artists' films, handing over an archive of rare work for public viewing. The recently launched Vdrome.org (set up by Italian art magazine *Mousse*) runs a programme of artists' films, including Beatrice Gibson's *The Tiger's Mind* and Nathaniel Mellors's surrealistic, TV-inspired *Ourhouse* series. Though so far it only features moving-image work commissioned elsewhere, through the selected streaming of artists' work, one at a time, Vdrome suggests a platform for the considered presentation of this work.

But as yet there's no online archive or viewing site that could deliver, say, the riches of London's Lux artists' moving-image agency (which has a good but relatively small selection of its work available online) or New York State's Experimental Television Center's archives – none, at any rate, that is as well curated and as adherent to copyright law.

There are, however, impressive collections being assembled, such as Ubuweb. Since 1996, this online archive has been run by New York-based artist and poet Kenneth Goldsmith and has blossomed (or bloated) exponentially into an iPlayer for experimental moving image. The effect it has had on the work of an emerging generation of artists is deep, and I would hazard a guess that



In at the deep end: Vdrome.org streams artists' work such as Nathaniel Mellors's 'Ourhouse' series

the artists mentioned here working today have all spent many hours trawling it. With the legacy of Western avant-garde and modernist work looming large, Ubuweb hosts a constellation of once rare artefacts: Fluxus films, Greenaway's documentaries on composers, Samuel Beckett film works, Andy Warhol's audio recording archive. Despite criticisms about a dismissive attitude towards intellectual property rights and its free-for-all anti-curation, Ubuweb does what all good progressive cultural institutions should do. Plunging the viewer into a froth of new ideas and ways of listening and seeing, it allows them to question what they've previously experienced, giving them various versions of the same history. And if the issue of copyright dogs the site, it's also now seen as something of a compliment to have one's art featured on it.

There are other platforms like it (indeed, much of Ubuweb's video comes from the defunct Art Torrents blog and private BitTorrent tracker, KaraGarga) but what it represents is important in understanding wider shifts in moving-image work. From within the noisy artefacts of compressed films ripped from VHS tapes, containing copies of earlier films or TV programmes (what artist/theorist Hito Steyerl has called "the poor image") emanates the spark of a contemporary fascination with resolution, the lively, fragmenting afterlife of the copy, and the ever-more-precise mimicry enabled by the supposed total recall furnished by the likes of YouTube.

One question emerges from this abundance of images: that of attention. Early artistic experiments in intervening with the televisual

continuum during the late 1960s and early 70s, such as those by David Hall in the UK and Chris Burden in the US, have remained influential. Both artists booked ad slots during television broadcasts, using the brief gaps to try to disrupt viewer's habituated expectations. One of Hall's 'TV Interruptions' showed a television set outdoors, set alight and burning. Burden booked time on a Los Angeles channel, broadcasting adverts for himself during late-night movies, seen by solitary individuals in the early hours. These short-form interventions in TV's temporal real estate were also attempts by the artists to try to reach a broader audience. In hindsight, this exposure placed their work into TV's own economy of attention. No matter how jarring a commercial might be, it is always subsumed into what critic Raymond Williams called the "irresponsible flow" of TV.

How to achieve such an intervention isn't so obvious today when so much activity in the online world already involves repeated entrepreneurial encroachments on our attention. Like TV, the internet thrives on distraction; but lacking TV's anxiety about upsetting domestic space with discomforts like political and social extremism, gore and pornography, it's potentially more insidious. The current maxim is that it has never been easier to get work out into the world but never more difficult to get people to watch it (unless it's a cat playing a piano). But, for the artist video-maker at least, the question is less how to grab someone's attention in a noisy world than how to focus, survive and flourish amid a rich plethora of images. And further: what it means to pay attention now. ⑥



Chris Burden's 'Full Financial Disclosure'



Ryan Trecartin's 'Ready (Re'Search Wait'S)'

HIGH PLAINS DRIFTER

As Tibet's first film director, Pema Tsenden has negotiated uncertain geographical, political and artistic boundaries to find a unique niche

By Steven Erickson

Even as they call for Tibetan independence, many Westerners romanticise the region, viewing it through a framework of Orientalist exotica. On the other hand, the Chinese government continues to rule it with a heavy hand. This places Tibetan director Pema Tsenden in a difficult position but he's carved out a slot in East Asian cinema with panache. In an interview with the Trace Foundation, a New York-based non-profit organisation promoting Tibetan culture, he states: "My friends and I had all seen many movies on Tibetan culture. However, most of these movies don't portray the way of life and value systems properly." Tsenden attended the Beijing Film Academy, from which he graduated in 2004 after making several shorts, and has pursued a parallel career as an author. The first director ever to emerge from Tibet, he's devoted himself to making accurate films about the country, shot with local crews, using Tibetan dialogue and casting nonprofessional actors. His only regret is that it's taken 110 years since the birth of cinema for the first Tibetan-made feature film to emerge.

That was Tsenden's debut film *The Silent Holy Stones* (2005), which depicts a monk who becomes obsessed with TV programmes based on Buddhist stories; in the meantime, his village is engaged in a production of the Tibetan opera *Drime Kunden*, about a man who sacrifices his eyes, wife and children. His second feature *The Search* (2009) seems to be heavily influenced by Abbas Kiarostami, particularly *And Life Goes On*, *Through the Olive Trees* and *The Wind Will Carry Us*. It portrays a team of filmmakers looking for actors to cast in a production of *Drime Kunden*; in



Pema Tsenden

particular, they're trying to track down a young man who used to be a child actor for the lead role. The narrative is digressive, periodically interrupted by a businessman recounting a story of lost love. The Kiarostami parallels are present in the way the story is structured around a quest, the use of a car as one of the main settings, the emphasis on interactions between filmmakers and ordinary people and the isolation of people as small shapes in immense landscapes. Tsenden isn't exactly depicting cultural amnesia – everyone his characters come across is familiar with *Drime Kunden* – but the possible degradation of Tibetan traditions is clearly on his mind. While the film's tone remains fairly light throughout, it ends on an unsettled, if not actively pessimistic, note. The quest remains unfulfilled.

Old Dog (2011) shows off Tsenden's flair for creating an aura of documentary realism. Like *The Search*, it's a fictional narrative, but it feels quite authentic. It deals with the trade in Tibetan

'Old Dog' seems like an allegory about the commodification of Tibetan culture, but it doesn't play out that simply

nomad mastiffs: following the thefts of several such dogs in his village, a young man decides to sell his family dog. He infuriates his father, who tries to buy it back. The narrative might seem like an obvious allegory about the commodification of Tibetan culture, but it doesn't play out that simply. Tsenden introduces a touch of bittersweet comedy and has quite an eye for framing. He rarely moves the camera or uses close-ups; on the few occasions when he does, it has an enormous impact. For the most part, he utilises extreme long shots taken from a stationary camera. Tsenden originally adopted video in his work, partly because the Tibetan winter makes 35mm film unusable, but he refuses to try to make it pass for film; *Old Dog's* cinematography is deliberately unpolished. The film is both witty and tragic, as it works in a subplot (also fraught with allegorical implications) about infertility.

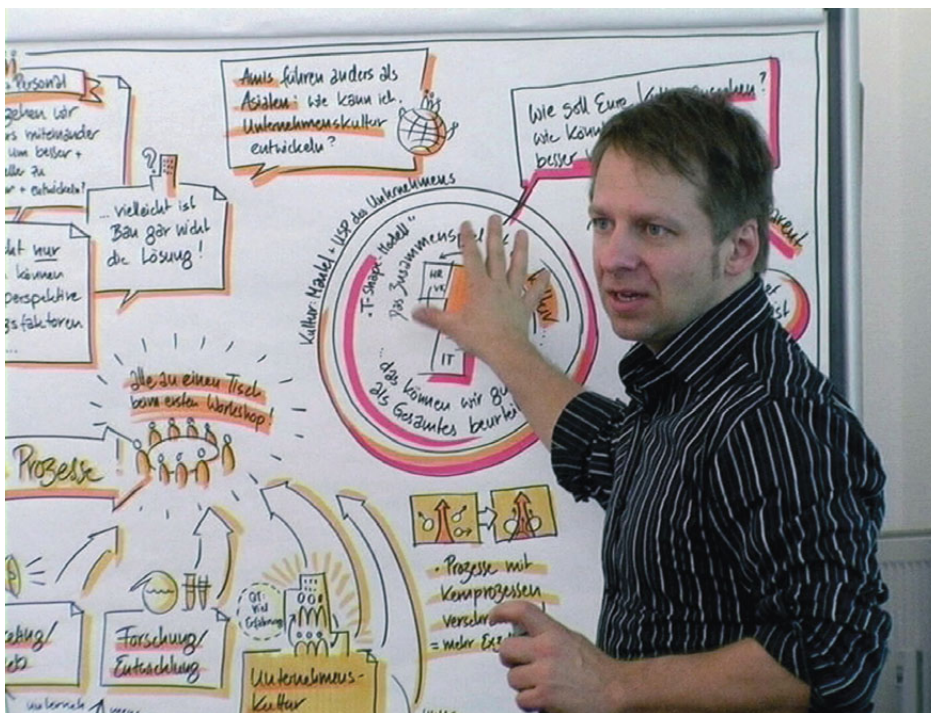
Stylistically, Tsenden's austerity and minimalism fit the fashionable mould of contemporary 'festival cinema'. Apart from Kiarostami, his work can recall mainland Chinese and Taiwanese filmmakers like Jia Zhangke and Hou Hsiao-Hsien. However, Tsenden claims to draw his visual approach from classical Tibetan artwork: "For *The Search*, I have applied the same logic of painting and storytelling employed in a traditional *thangka*... [in which] many stories, like the lives of the Buddha, can be expressed in a single painting." Characters sometimes blur into the background, while the landscape often becomes the film's real focus.

Tsenden isn't an independent filmmaker. He's chosen to work within the Chinese government's system of production, with its constraints of censorship. Therefore the anger expressed in *Old Dog* is relatively muted, if nevertheless impossible to overlook. Even so, Tsenden's work is remarkable for shedding light on daily life in an oft-mythologised part of the world. In his films, Tibet isn't Shangri-La but neither is it just another part of China. ☺



Master and mastiff: Pema Tsenden's *'Old Dog'* shows the Tibetan director's flair for creating an aura of documentary realism

VIDEO ART, VIDEO ACTIVISM



The shape of things to come: Harun Farocki's 'New Product'

The Cinéma du réel documentary festival in Paris offered intriguing hybrid features and strands on Chile and economic crisis

By Kieron Corless

For ten days every March, the Cinéma du réel festival, now in its 35th year, takes over the lower ground floor of the Pompidou Centre in Paris, as well as holding screenings at two other nearby cinemas. Along with FID Marseille in the south, it's one of France's leading documentary festivals, previously only known to me by way of its considerable reputation; my first visit this year coincided with the appointment of a new artistic director, Maria Bonsanti, fresh from Festival dei Popoli in Florence. The festival's compact structure includes international, first-film, short and French competition strands, sitting alongside several curated themed programmes and two director homages, this year to Anand Patwardhan and the late Stephen Dwoskin, both covered recently in *Sight & Sound*.

Despite documentary's high profile in cinemas nowadays, and the proliferating number of festivals catering to the genre, 'documentary' is a term towards which more than a few directors I've discussed it with (even those making variants thereof) evince wariness, if not moderate hostility. Perhaps this is a result of the term's still-lingering pretensions in certain quarters to objectivity, an assumption of automatic (unexamined) truth-status – or of a sense of the constrictions, particularly formal, that it's perceived to impose (and as for that loaded word 'réel' in the festival's title, best not to go there; I've only got 750 words.)

There's no doubt the word documentary can impose limited expectations – I heard one filmmaker decry the Otolith Group's

2013 work *The Radiant* (in the international competition) as video art and Patwardhan's work as video activism, each apparently ill-befitting a documentary festival. Ah, sweet purism! The beauty of Cinéma du réel and other like-minded festivals is their openness to eclecticism, border-crossings and novel and/or mutant forms; "the exploration of cinematographic languages", as Bonsanti succinctly phrased it in her programme notes.

The international competition winner was *Fifi Howls from Happiness*, by young Iranian director Mitra Farahani, a very entertaining encounter with Bahman Mohasses, one of Iran's greatest 20th-century artists, now retired and languishing in reclusive obscurity in a Roman hotel till Farahani persuades him to be her subject. At first glance it's a fairly conventional film, gradually accruing complexity as we realise the extent to which Mohasses – a captivating, highly articulate figure given to grand nihilistic pronouncements pursued by a rasping laugh – is putting on a performance, constructing a legacy, settling his account with the world. Little by little, it's as if he charms Farahani into complicit submission and assumes directorship of the film, and in so doing delivers a real emotional punch at the end.

The Otolith Group's *The Radiant* is a very different beast, far more invested in formal exploration, the rhythmic interplay of sound and image, and subtle, far-reaching political probing. The duo are based in the UK but strangely have not been invited to screen their work in any gallery or cinema here since they

The beauty of festivals like this is their openness to eclecticism, border-crossings and mutant forms



'Fifi Howls from Happiness'



'The Radiant'

were nominated for the Turner Prize in 2010. Pity, because *The Radiant*, made for last year's Documenta, is a beautifully assembled, essayistic meditation on the long-term consequences of the Fukushima disaster – one of which, given its nature, is "the creation of new dimensions of the invisible", lending the film's repeated landscape shots an increasingly eerie patina. The sound design is superbly executed, especially during two stand-out montage sequences where the film effortlessly shifts up several gears, driven by urgent, insistent, hypnotic music. Of the films I saw in competition, this for me was the stand-out.

Of the themed programmes, 'Art and the Crisis: From the New Deal to Nowadays', curated by the venerable Bernard Eisenschitz, which included a screening of King Vidor's *Our Daily Bread* alongside militant newsreels and government-produced films, was timely and provocative.

But the series of films I found myself repeatedly gravitating towards – also possessed of a certain currency but in ways less easy to define – was Federico Rossin's programme on Chile 1973-2013, which examined in some detail the social and political circumstances that led to Allende's election and overthrow, and traced all the subsequent horrors under Pinochet. One film in particular stood out, a collectively produced, brilliantly lucid left-polemical essay film called *La Spirale* (1976), which looked in piercing depth at the Right's destabilisation techniques against Allende's government.

There were other attractions in the contemporary strands I was glad to have seen – Harun Farocki's medium-length *New Product*, Salome Lamas's *No-Man's Land* – but the curated sections were for me the real draw, providing the festival's historical ballast and intellectual rigour. I could have happily devoted my whole time in Paris to exclusive immersion in them. ☺

WEIRD HARMONY

Spring Breakers provides a cue to revisit the remarkable black-metal soundtrack of Harmony Korine's directorial debut *Gummo*

By Frances Morgan

Harmony Korine's *Gummo* was released in the UK 15 years ago this summer. As Korine's *Spring Breakers*, newly opened the week I write this, turns cinema screens into an endless YouTube nightmare or exhibits a searing experimental vision (depending on your take), it feels like the right time to revisit the sound and music of Korine's directorial debut. *Spring Breakers* inhabits an unimaginably different world to that of *Gummo* but responses to the 1997 film were similarly polarised. Korine was already notorious for his script for Larry Clark's *Kids* (1995), written when he was 19, and *Gummo*'s depictions of young people living amid poverty, violence, disability and drug-taking in the small town of Xenia, Ohio were immediately subject to charges of amorality – of the kind of hip blankness, prurience and cruelty that would later become synonymous with *Vice* magazine (which in 1998 ran a story on Korine ironically hailing him as Jesus).

While *Spring Breakers* is powered by beats and bass – hip hop, pop, Skrillex's monolithic brostep – *Gummo*'s soundtrack consisted mostly of black, death and doom metal by bands such as Absu, Eyehategod, Mortician and Bethlehem. These genres were, at the time, deeply subcultural compared to the nu-metal that was in the process of rejuvenating rock's presence in the mainstream, and were yet to be brought into aesthetic respectability by avant-metal bands such as sunn O))) and artists including Banks Violette and Korine himself (with the exhibition 'The Sigil of the Cloven Hoof Marks Thy Path'). During the 1990s, films had increasingly used pop music in unexpected and jarring ways – the zeitgeisty rush of the *Trainspotting* soundtrack had a lot to answer for – but Korine's bombardment of his audience with black metal was something rawer, more brutal and, at the same time, more complex.

Many viewers, myself included, at first heard only the rawness. This is unsurprising given that we see, for example, Solomon (Jacob Reynolds) and Tumbler (Nick Sutton) whipping a dead cat hung from a tree to the rasp and roar of a 1996 track by Brazilian black band Mystifier. To unfamiliar ears, and with such a visual analogue, this stuff sounds like chaos, pure and simple; the sped-up sounds of fiends in hell with none of the sonic depth of field or rhythmic regularity you expect from rock music. It's a mess. And yet it's a modern mess, as Korine explained to Cameron Jamie in a 1998 interview in *Frieze* magazine: "I didn't want to go back and use retro cheese metal. I'm not interested in ever making period pieces, they don't interest me. The new metal is so different and progressed in such a weird way that it's almost more like Bach or Nordic opera than Black Sabbath."

While the kids in *Gummo* dress in clothes that reference the 80s – a kind of misunderstood mixture of thrash metal and third-hand urban



A music fan's film: 'Gummo' is peppered with references to underground music culture

styles – and live in a faded environment filled with decaying, worn-out items, Korine for the most part chooses tracks that are roughly contemporaneous with his film. Although the film is often talked about as a portrait of the US, the soundtrack is not all-American, containing music from not only Brazil but also Germany, Sweden and, of course, Norway, the country of black metal's origin. Korine wasn't necessarily trying to show us what *Gummo*'s characters would be listening to, whether that was Bathory or the American folk singer Almeda Riddle, whose 'My Little Rooster' opens the film; and this, I think, gives *Gummo* something of its strange atmosphere. But nor was he trying to impose music completely at odds with their experiences or set up glaring juxtapositions. Within the sonic scree of the *Gummo* soundtrack there's perhaps



'Spring Breakers'

To unfamiliar ears, this stuff sounds like chaos, pure and simple: the sped-up sounds of fiends in hell

an attempt to give an epic quality to the marginal lives on screen, just as the Scandinavian metal scenes of which Korine is something of a scholar formulated their grandiose esoteric/nationalist mythoi in nondescript European towns.

That he is fascinated not only by metal's abrasive sound but its social context is clear from a quiet piece of synthesiser music that, innocuous as it sounds, is probably *Gummo*'s most controversial track. It's from *Filosofem*, an album by Burzum, aka black-metal musician Varg Vikernes, who in 1993 had been imprisoned, charged with (and later convicted of) the murder of a fellow musician and arson attacks on some of Norway's historical wooden churches, and would go on to adopt the right-wing politics inextricably linked with the genre. The track adds to the patina of eeriness that lies over *Gummo*'s location, and its banality is more menacing than screeching guitars. But for those who recognised it, the case and its ensuing moral panic were still fresh in 1998 – and in that context Korine's use of Burzum was a textbook bit of hipster prurience (compared to which his recruiting of rapper Gucci Mane, who'd just served a short prison sentence, to act in *Spring Breakers* seems quite tame).

Gummo is a music fan's film, peppered with



references to underground music culture – in just one example, the trio of sisters headed by Chloë Sevigny are named Dot, Betty and Helen after 1960s ‘outsider’ family group The Shaggs. Their song about a missing cat, ‘My Pal Foot-Foot’, is acted out in *Gummo* as the girls search for a lost pet of the same name. Since *Gummo*, Korine’s films have been notable for their use of music, but none was quite so obviously driven by it until *Spring Breakers*. Much of the coverage of the new film has focused on its soundtrack. On the Talkhouse site, writer Amy Klein (also a musician) notes that “in a movie where everyone’s a stereotype, music is the only thing that’s actually alive” – despite that music’s synthetic, Autotuned textures. But she also likens the film to “a well produced album with no emotional core”, concluding that it’s “a giant excuse for Korine to play music, and to play visually with the ideas contained in contemporary popular music”.

Gummo’s detractors saw it as a similar indulgence – a young, disaffected filmmaker mapping his nihilistic and retrograde view of white-trash North America using equally nihilistic extreme rock music, sweetened or sentimentalised with occasional doses of ironic pop. Fifteen years later, though, I see and hear it more as a product of the nostalgic postmodern mood of the late 1990s than as indicative of any kind of pre-millennial future shock. Its edges softened by time, it’s a weirdly soulful film almost against its will; and I’m still not tired of the bit where the kids ride their bikes down the hill to the sound of Sleep’s ‘Dragonaut’. 📺

ILLUSTRATION BY MICK BROWNFIELD WWW.MICKBROWNFIELD.COM

PRIMAL SCREEN THE WORLD OF SILENT CINEMA

Scenes of classical devastation, which still fascinate today, helped to secure cinema’s artistic and commercial status



By Ian Christie

The British Museum may not have been motivated by any sense of an anniversary in mounting its blockbuster Pompeii exhibition, but from a film-history point of view it’s effectively marking the centenary of two films that did much to revolutionise both the business and cultural status of cinema. Mario Caserini’s ‘The Last Days of Pompeii’ opened in London at the West End Cinema in October 1913, accompanied by “full orchestra, with specially arranged music”. All seats were bookable, at prices that ranged from an already considerable shilling to an almost unbelievable half-guinea. Schools and colleges were offered “special prices for group visits to Lord Lytton’s classical masterpiece”.

There had been two earlier adaptations of Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s early Victorian novel, which first created a melodramatic backstory to the ghoulishly anticipated climax of this early disaster story. Robert Paul’s brief 1900 version (now lost) may have been partly inspired by the popularity of Pompeii-themed ‘pyrodrama’ firework displays at Alexandra Palace, near his North London studio, but shrewdly condensed the novel into a dance at the hero’s house, with a model Vesuvius seen through a window before “the volcano throws out lava, which rushes over the house, of which the pillars and walls fall in, making a complete wreck”.

Eight years later, a ten-minute adaptation by Arturo Ambrosio helped launch the vogue for Italian ancient-world spectacles that would briefly dominate world cinema. And by the time of the same producer’s 1913 version, the new trend towards long films – highly controversial within the film trade – made it possible to “preserve the interest of the narrative throughout and work up to a dramatic climax”, as ‘The Times’ noted appreciatively. “The gladiatorial contests in the arena are suddenly interrupted by the eruption of Vesuvius, followed by the wild flight of the populace, whose frantic efforts to escape are reproduced with great realism.”

By now, Ambrosio faced stiff competition from other Italian companies who had jumped onto the classical bandwagon, and Cines’s ‘Quo Vadis?’, based on another popular 19th-century novel set in early Christian Rome, by the Polish writer Henryk Senkiewicz, had already enjoyed unprecedented success in London earlier in 1913. On that year’s May bank-holiday weekend, 23,000 spectators flocked to ‘Quo Vadis?’ for what was the Albert Hall’s first extended film booking, and newspaper listings reveal the role that these ancient-

Offering spectacle and prestige, these titles helped to entrench new trends towards long films and large-scale cinemas



Spectacular: ‘The Last Days of Pompeii’ (1913)

world epics played in attracting audiences to the new, large-scale cinemas that were being widely opened. After King George and Queen Mary visited the Albert Hall to see ‘Quo Vadis?’ in May, the film gained even greater fame: “As shown before their majesties the King and Queen,” proclaimed the Finchley Rink Cinema.

A year later, Giovanni Pastrone’s ‘Cabiria’ would eclipse its forerunners as the most thrilling and spectacular compendium of Roman spectacle, starting with a volcanic eruption clearly borrowed from Pompeii and continuing with pagan sacrifice, naval battles and Hannibal crossing the Alps with elephants. “Simply stupendous,” wrote the future playwright Eugene O’Neill, then a Harvard student, and in a 1914 survey of cinema managers on “what the public wants”, ‘Quo Vadis?’ was the only film mentioned twice; it was later cited among “several other masterpieces”, originally viewed suspiciously by exhibitors as “too artistic”, that proved to trade paper ‘The Bioscope’ that “the public is really interested in the technical and artistic development of the picture play”.

The Roman films of 1910-15 arrived at a time when producers, distributors and exhibitors were all looking for ways of extending and holding their audiences’ attention and experimenting with the long films that would become the industry standard. They were accompanied by new forms of publicity and promotion, with press shows, press books and souvenir brochures, all considered worthwhile investments for films that could compete in the cultural marketplace. With their scale and classical associations, they helped neutralise opposition to the moving pictures as a corrupting influence; they gave status to many of the new super-cinemas that showed them; and, above all, they appealed to a broad audience, with confirmed filmgoers now joined by many who had previously spurned the picture palaces. Early indications are that the British Museum is experiencing something like the same ‘Pompeii effect’ a century later; and in July Bologna’s Cinema Ritrovato festival will no doubt be paying tribute to the original blockbusters of 1913. 📺



The 1959 film ‘The Last Days of Pompeii’ screens on 11 May at the British Museum, London, alongside the museum’s Pompeii exhibition, which runs until 29 September

LIBIDO, MORALITY AND A BROOM

Usually seen as an oddity, if seen at all, Nicholas Ray's late erotic short *The Janitor* distils his interest in the tussle between id and superego



By Brad Stevens

In the mid-1980s, aspiring auteurs without easy access to London's repertory cinemas had far more opportunities

to read articles about Nicholas Ray than to see his work. Prior to BBC2's Ray season in 1986, these films rarely played on television and few were available on video: *The Lusty Men* (1952) was apparently released in 1981 by a company called '21st Century' but I never managed to track it down; a double bill of *Flying Leathernecks* (1951) and Fritz Lang's *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* (1956) supposedly disseminated by Kingston proved similarly inaccessible (come to think of it, I don't recall seeing any of Kingston's mouth-watering double-bills in an actual shop); transfers of *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) and *55 Days at Peking* (1963) issued respectively by Warners and Intervision were so badly panned-and-scanned as to be unwatchable.

So my introduction to Ray came in the form of a tape found in the porn section of a local video store: *Dreams of Thirteen*. This turned out to be a retitling of *Wet Dreams* (*Rêves humides*, 1974), a portmanteau feature produced by Max Fischer (like Ray, a friend of Henri Langlois), who asked several filmmakers – including writer Heathcote Williams (whose play *The Local Stigmatic* would later be filmed by Al Pacino) and a pseudonymous Dusan Makavejev – to shoot their erotic fantasies. The BBFC cut an entire episode, Falcon Stuart's *Necrophiliacs*, from the version shown in UK cinemas (rendering the new title, which ostensibly referred to the number of directors involved rather than the age of the naked girl on the poster, doubly misleading), and this truncated edition was subsequently distributed on VHS and Betamax by 'World of Video 2000' in 1979, making it one of the first films to be released on video anywhere. Amusingly, the packaging claims that *Dreams of Thirteen* was financed by a "German multi-millionaire", and identifies Nicholas Ray as the person who discovered James Dean and directed *East of Eden*!

Ray's 12-minute segment 'The Janitor' (itself slightly trimmed by the BBFC) was improvised in Fischer's Amsterdam studio over the course of a few days in 1973, with the director playing both lead roles: a priest who denounces Moses's Ten Commandments before overseeing an orgy during which he is fellated by several young women (one of whom may be his daughter), and the eponymous janitor, who exists in his own separate corner of the narrative, agonising over the priest's activities and finally setting fire to a screen upon which his doppelgänger's image is being projected. Ray staged much of this as a theatrical 'happening', leaving Fischer, who was the main cameraman, to cover the unpredictable action as if he were shooting



Hints of bisexuality: Nicholas Ray, left, with James Dean on the set of 'Rebel Without a Cause'

documentary footage. Reviewing *Dreams of Thirteen* for the April 1977 *Monthly Film Bulletin*, Peter Markham described Ray's episode as an "ineffectual attempt at Absurdist profundity, embarrassing in its narcissism", while Bernard Eisenschitz, in *Nicholas Ray: An American Journey*, claims: "One probably has to be very involved with Ray's films or with his personal evolution to appreciate 'The Janitor' as anything more than a crude sketch." I knew little about Ray when I first saw this short yet was immediately struck by how accurately it caught the elusive quality of a dream, taking place in a series of rooms whose function as abstract dream-spaces is perversely strengthened by their solidity: there seems to be no geographical relationship between the studio being swept by the janitor and the church where the priest addresses his congregation yet these locations keep bleeding into each other (the janitor finds the priest's hat as well as the ruby ring he claims to have lost), reflecting the split nature of Ray's doubled protagonist.

'The Janitor' has long been one of the most difficult Ray films to see (transfers circulating via the internet, including YouTube, were derived from a French-dubbed edition), which makes it more than a little ironic that it should have provided my entree into Ray's universe, becoming the prism through which I would experience the rest of his oeuvre. In its focus on the moralistic janitor's opposition to a libidinal priest (the patriarchal authority figure and working-class employee reversing their usual symbolic roles), 'The Janitor' has a great deal in common with Ray's earlier films, which frequently depicted struggles between superego and id figures: Emma (Mercedes McCambridge) and the Dancin' Kid (Scott Brady) in *Johnny Guitar* (1954), Leith (Richard Burton) and Brand (Curd Jürgens) in *Bitter Victory* (1957), Walt Murdock (Christopher Plummer) and Cottonmouth (Burl Ives) in *Wind Across the Everglades* (1958),

My introduction to Ray came in the form of a tape found in the porn section of a local video store, labelled 'Dreams of Thirteen'

Thomas Farrell (Robert Taylor) and Rico Angelo (Lee J. Cobb) in *Party Girl* (1958), Inuk (Anthony Quinn) and Peter O'Toole's nameless trooper in *The Savage Innocents* (1960), Christ (Jeffrey Hunter) and Barabbas (Harry Guardino) in *King of Kings* (1961). *Bigger Than Life* (1956) located this conflict within a single personality.

By playing both parts himself in what would be his last completed work, Ray confirmed just how personal his Hollywood movies were, revealing the extent to which the struggle they depict was an internal one. 'The Janitor' creates an atmosphere of sexual guilt that is both specific and generalised, and stands alongside *Rebel Without a Cause* as perhaps the clearest cinematic expression of its auteur's bisexuality: it begins with the janitor mentioning (in voiceover) how he once heard that "at an international convention of psychoanalysts in Amsterdam one day, the entire discussion was about how each one present had his fantasy about sucking his own cock. I thought it was very indecent." Even the janitor's broom is suggestive of sexual confusion (or ambivalence), its owner initially stroking the rigid 'phallus' at one end, then caressing the hairy appendage at the other.

Happily, a good-quality transfer of 'The Janitor' was included as an extra on Oscilloscope's region-free US DVD/Blu-ray of Ray's *We Can't Go Home Again* (1973). Though that disc's main feature has understandably been garnering more attention, the availability of 'The Janitor', rescued from its rather ignoble context and finally viewable both uncut and in English, is among the more welcome events of recent cinephile history.

LIKE VODKA FOR WATER

An ambivalent, dreamlike erotic fable featuring Zalman King and Richard Pryor, *Some Call It Loving* seems made for culthood

By Ian Penman

The reasons why one thing haunts where another fades may not be fully present to consciousness. Sometimes only a few misremembered lines or a tiny gesture make an otherwise shoddy film glow in recollection. When asked last year to choose my ten best ever films for *Sight & Sound*, I realised a notable majority of my shortlist were films I had seen only once, many years ago, obscurities I had been surprised by on television and never seen again.

Some Call It Loving (James Harris, 1973) is one of those films. I've only ever seen it as a VHS copy I made off late-night TV in the late 1980s and so far as I know it's never been revived or climbed into the lower divisions of culthood. I don't think it's even officially available on DVD (Amazon lists only a 1980s VHS priced at \$203!). And yet it seems a work made for culthood: a highbrow erotic fable made by Kubrick's producer, featuring kinky auteur Zalman King, Richard Pryor (in perhaps the most convincing of his rare serious roles) and Tisa Farrow (she of the bruised forehead in James Toback's *Fingers*). It seems more like a film Clare Quilty might have planned in reverie than a work that was actually written, cast, directed and invited to Cannes. (As is so often the way, it was celebrated in Europe and ignored in the States.)

I often hesitate to revisit such fondly recalled strangers but this title has held its strange allure. I suspect the only reason I taped it at the time was the presence of my hero Pryor – how come I'd never heard of this early role? As titles go, *Some Call It Loving* suggests some clammy porno that ran for five years straight in a semi-legal Soho jerk-pit and, objectively speaking, it is easy to lose patience with this 70s soufflé. Female viewers especially might find the clichéd male wish-list hard going: fetchingly empty hi-moderne pads by the ocean, groovy sax solos and obliging (and fetchingly empty) dream women. *Some Call It Loving* may indeed be read as an indulgent Hef-cat dream of untroubled *ménages à trois* in an airless bachelor pad; yet it's clearly (or fuzzily) also a critique essaying the impossibility of turning such wan fantasy into real-life exchange.

King plays a (very) rich, (very) white sax player whose home life is ultra tasteful, stylised, bordering on inert – as is King's performance, which seems so glazed you worry he's been drugged or hypnotised. Initially, I was baffled by his presence – I only knew him as the reigning king of 80s video-erotica and wasn't aware he'd started out (like Cassavetes) as a tough-kid actor in 60s US TV. Was *Some Call It Loving* the thing that planted the seed, so to speak, of his future career in tastemaker erotica? (Nudge-nudging aside, King is a far more interesting auteur than he's often given credit for.)

Shouldn't it be Pryor playing the incredible bebop saxophonist and peaky, geeky Zalman, with his perfectly awful post-hippie hair, as



Sexual politics as glossy confetti: dark-suited male fantasy meets dress-up dream house

It seems more like a film Clare Quilty might have planned in reverie than one that was really made and invited to Cannes

his craven friend-cum-fan, instead of the other way round? I used to watch all the Pryor cameo bits together on VHS – his performance as a pitiful street junkie is like some strange jazz track that could be a risible leap too far or some kind of brave new way of playing. The character is suspiciously similar to one Pryor did as part of his stand-up act at the time; in both cases, it's something of a tightrope walk between black cultural in-joke and channelling the genuine tragedy of wasted potential.

Things proceed as if in a dream, which is to say now worryingly vivid and now chimingly flat. King pays a visit to a heavily symbolic carnival where he 'saves' (well, buys) the young soft-porny

Sleeping Beauty of the film's alternate title. I won't unwind the subsequent plot twists but the film does recall other vaguely contemporaneous films like *Performance* and *Celine and Julie Go Boating* – in a way, it's pitched exactly halfway between the former's dark-suited male fantasy and the latter's dress-up dream house. In each case, house or home becomes a strange theatrical point of transit, escape or regression, in which the sexual politics of the time are thrown in the air like so much glossy confetti. There are boxes inside boxes, dolls within dolls, and the film makes you feel uneasy about your complicity as watcher or voyeur. In the end, we're all gawky spectators in this thin carny tent.

I wonder if Alan Rudolph ever saw *Some Call It Loving*, because it's not such a stretch from here to the stoned perfection of mid-career Rudolph classics like 1984's *Choose Me*: the same jumbled-up aesthetic of exact contemporary observation and fairytale trapdoor; the same attention to the flirty italics of background music; and possibly a similar moral pay-off – sex is the easy part, it's the rest that's hard to parse or arrange. Also, *Some Call It Loving* is like a softcore dry run for the first half of Lynch's 1997 *Lost Highway* (the hi-moderne pad, the white sax player, the glazed-to-dummyish wife/women, a Richard Pryor cameo). The two films share an oscillation between unlikely drama and chilly banality: a kind of fugue (in both senses) in which nothing fits. Likewise, *Some Call It Loving* doesn't really fit easily into any one genre box. (In this it also resembles Harris's own mystifyingly ad-hoc career as director.)

The film's final pay-off is interesting but in the end it's odd details that lurk longest in the memory: Pryor's performance, the mysterious 'fata morgana' jukebox, the unlikely carny. Have you ever gone to take a long draught of water one hungover morning and realized too late it was a glass of last night's vodka? *Some Call It Loving* is a bit like that – all the signs indicate a rather bland and predictable period piece but it has a real unexpected sting in its allegorical tale. 

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID

"Spectators who like to keep their fairy tales innocent, their pornography sordid, their allegories obvious and their dreams intact are bound to be disconcerted by James B. Harris' haunting 'Some Call it Loving', which pursues the improbabilities of dream logic to clarify rather than mystify, and tough-mindedly concerns itself with the processes and consequences of dreaming as well as its objects. Unique and alone, it remains obstinately and superbly unclassifiable. It has a style that can only be described through musical analogies: one of disenchanted lyricism, or of circular lament"

Jonathan Rosenbaum, 'Sight & Sound', Autumn 1975

TAKING ISSUE

IN SEARCH OF THE AUTEUR

When Stéphane Delorme, editor-in-chief of *Cahiers du cinéma*, read our recent obituary of Oshima Nagisa, he was struck by Tony Rayns's interpretation of the Japanese director's rejection of auteur status. Here, he challenges that interpretation, while the obituary's author responds in his own inimitable style



Author, author: Oshima, centre, on the set of 'Ai no corrida' ('In the Realm of the Senses', 1976)

Stéphane Delorme

In the March issue of *Sight & Sound*, Tony Rains [sic] wrote an obituary of Oshima Nagisa, declaring that the director refused to become an "auteur": "The greatest of all his refusals was the refusal to develop a 'personal' style." It's true Oshima had no recognisable style insofar as he frantically experimented with an escalating number of options, but in what way was he not an auteur? Is an auteur defined solely by his style? Not at all; the "auteur policy" ("*la politique des auteurs*") was never defined by style. And to adapt a phrase of Céline's, we could say: "Style clings everywhere." Every filmmaker can have a style, but in no way does it determine the coherence and quality of the work.

The Harmony Korine who made *Spring Breakers* is the same filmmaker who made the execrable *Mister Lonely*, and whose all-sorts videos are scattered across the internet. Korine's

style? We might feel at a loss to describe it. But this time what we might call his *gesture* hits the mark. When Gus Van Sant makes *Promised Land*, we can't recognise the style of *Gerry* or *Elephant*. However, there's no doubt he's the same auteur. He follows the same path as Coppola, who shot in the same year – and on a similar subject – two films with opposite styles: *The Outsiders* and *Rumble Fish*. What do these filmmakers have in common? A respectful gesture (being so close to their subjects that they forget themselves, mould themselves to their subjects), tending nevertheless towards the avant garde and the ready-made (Korine).

An auteur doesn't make just one gesture. A film is an ensemble of gestures, and it is those that one reviews and appraises

Another recent film, Bruno Dumont's *Camille Claudel 1915*, is the work of a filmmaker whose style is becoming more recognisable, refined and distinct with each film. However, something has changed: the attitude, the gaze and the tone are different. Whether he's following an impulse or simply loosening up, his style suddenly takes on a new breadth. On the other hand, in *To the Wonder* by Terrence Malick, the machine is broken, the style reduced to a few gimmicks; it's a caricature of style, sustained by the complacency of a filmmaker watching himself filming. The breadth of his previous gesture is reduced, diminished like a shrinking asset.

In *Writing Degree Zero*, Roland Barthes clearly distinguished style from writing. In style, which escapes the author, "imagery, delivery, vocabulary spring from the body and the past of the writer and gradually become the very reflexes of his art." On the other hand, writing stems from choices: "a general choice of tone, of ethos", "the choice



Juliette Binoche in 'Camille Claudel, 1915'

of a human attitude, the affirmation of a certain Good... writing is thus essentially the morality of form." The morality of form? The auteur policy did indeed develop "the morality of *mise en scène*", which has always signified a relation to the world, a way of looking. Such a commitment can be summed up in that one word: the gesture. What gesture does Korine make with *Spring Breakers*? Dumont with *Camille Claudel, 1915*? Van Sant with *Promised Land*? *The Outsiders* and *Rumble Fish* have antithetical styles, but the gesture is the same: to glorify adolescence and pay tribute to male bonding. The notion of 'the gesture' also has the advantage of sustaining the idea of 'the event', film by film, scene by scene, shot by shot. An auteur doesn't make just one gesture. A film is an ensemble of gestures, and it is those gestures that one reviews and appraises.

The gesture goes beyond form and denotes an engagement with the world. How to look at the other? Raising, lowering, observing, admiring, criticising, denouncing, affirming, negating... This does not mean 'morality' in any narrow sense. Oshima always refused automatic responses. That was the measure of his moral stature – he was, let's not forget, a man who celebrated criminals. In the same way Korine detonates his film like a critical charge (the little skateboarder from New York amidst Miami's meatheads?), but the ambiguity of his gesture is also to adore the bodies, to have fun with them, laugh about them – and to throw his film as if he were throwing a bomb. As with Oshima, the gesture is not simple, it has to be named. That is the task of the critic: to name the gestures in their singularity. *This editorial was first published in 'Cahiers du cinéma' no. 687. Translation by Paul Buck & Catherine Petit*

Tony Rayns

I'll do Stéphane Delorme a courtesy he doesn't do me (that is, spell his name right), but he'll have to excuse me for finding his attempt to refocus "the task of the critic" less than gripping and his enduring enthusiasm for Francis Ford Coppola's adaptations of S.E. Hinton novels hard to share. It seems anyway slightly odd to use an obituary for Oshima Nagisa as the pretext for a quibble about the definition of auteur as a critical term. Or maybe I just mean 'very French' rather than 'slightly odd'.

Is it ahistorical or merely 'very French' to fail to note that the concept of a film auteur has evolved

over the years? François Truffaut's 'La Politique des auteurs' (*Cahiers du cinéma*, January 1954) was essentially a cinéophile polemic: *politique* means policy, and Truffaut was asserting that the magazine should devote the lion's share of its attention to 'major' film authors (such as Renoir) rather than 'minor' hacks (such as Delannoy). The underlying presumption was that the director is the film's author. Eight years later Andrew Sarris brought the presumption into Anglo-Saxon critical discourse (in the pages of the New York magazine *Film Culture*, Winter 1962/63) as "the Auteur Theory". The switch from a 'policy' to a 'theory' reflected a fundamental difference between French and American attitudes to cinema. The French cultural establishment had no trouble with Truffaut's presumption, but Sarris was widely mocked for 'theorising' that Hollywood movies were in any meaningful sense 'authored' by their directors. The same thing happened in Britain very shortly afterwards when Ian Cameron and his friends launched *Movie* by asserting the interest of Otto Preminger and Vincente Minnelli as auteurs. *Sight & Sound*, then under the editorship of Penelope Houston, led the chorus of derision.

As Truffaut knew, the issue was fundamentally generational. In Britain and the US, younger critics took to Sarris's Auteur Theory like rockers to pomade; London's *Time Out* highlighted directors from the very start, and knew full well that the author of, say, *Forty Guns* was Sam Fuller and not Darryl F. Zanuck or Twentieth Century-Fox. Before long, mainstream broadsheet papers were full of director profiles and interviews; the battle was won. But the meaning of 'auteur' soon changed. Sarris's argument had been all about discovering authors where none had previously been recognised. Once it was widely accepted that interesting directors tended to make interesting films, no matter whether they worked inside or outside genre, the term auteur was more frequently applied to ostentatiously proprietorial

Is it ahistorical or merely 'very French' to fail to note that the concept of a film auteur has evolved over the years?



A Sam Fuller picture: 'Forty Guns' (1957)

film authors, directors like Angelopoulos or Haneke whose XL egos rarely allowed them to acknowledge creative contributions from anyone else on their teams, and who evidently saw it as their moral right to sternly lecture their supine audiences. Just to clarify, it's in this latter sense that Oshima refused the status of auteur. He did briefly flirt with the idea of turning himself into a brand name, probably under the influence of David Bowie (remember those "Oshima Gang" T-shirts?), but quickly reverted to kimono-clad reticence and detachment.

Delorme argues that style was never a determinant in Truffaut's "auteur policy", and he's certainly right. (A better example of insubstantial style than his choice of Malick's *To the Wonder* would be the nullity that is Wong Kar-Wai's *The Grandmaster*, a dense assemblage of authorial tropes which confirms that a once-formidable creative intelligence is now running on empty.) But his suggestion that we turn instead to "the gesture" as a means of evaluating movies seems at best unhelpful. The term is defined with faux precision as a signifier of the "moral" way an author sees the world, not to be found in the making of a single film but observable from shot to shot, scene to scene and film to film across an oeuvre. As a tool to help me come to terms with, say, Oshima's trajectory from vehement nihilism through political disillusionment and conceptual game-playing to erotic transgression, this is completely useless. I'll stick with close textual analysis, thanks.

With its charmingly retro appeal to the late Roland Barthes for an intellectual imprimatur, "the gesture" could be dismissed easily enough as a sentimental throwback to the days of 'theory'. I could even shrug it off as 'very French' – except that it's oddly reminiscent of the punchline at the end of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* cycle. When Harry confronts his nemesis Voldemort at the last, he realises that both of them have access to the same powers; what distinguishes them is not power itself but the way they choose to use it. Barthes was on the right track, but Rowling puts it better: it all comes down to morality. If Delorme is arguing that a critic needs to be alert to an author's morality, as refracted through the way he/she sees the world, I couldn't agree more. As a critical strategy, though, this doesn't get us very far. ☹



Wong Kar-Wai's 'The Grandmaster'

READERS' LETTERS

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight & Sound, BFI, 21 Stephen Street, London W1T 1LN Fax: 020 7436 2327 Email: S&S@bfi.org.uk

SHRINKING UNIVERSE

Recently having attended a showing of 2001: A Space Odyssey at my local arthouse cinema, the Gulbenkian at the University of Kent, I was dismayed to see the 1:2.20 film was projected on a 1:1.85 screen, letterboxed. This cinema has a full 1:2.35 screen and has recently been converted to digital projection. On complaining, I received the following worrying response:

"Thank you for writing to me regarding this. I understand the frustration of seeing a film you've previously enjoyed in Cinemascope being smaller than you expected. I've since looked into the incident further and I can confirm our on-duty projectionist was correct to project in 1:1.85 ratio, as this was how the digital DCP edition (we no longer have 35 mm) was re-mastered by Technicolor under the direct order of the studio, Warner Brothers. The instructions we received with the drive were to present it in this, and not 1:2.35. I can only speculate as to the reasons for this – one being [that] nowadays, digital cinemascope is strictly 1:2.35 as defined by DCI (Digital Cinema Compliance)... [and] 2001 is 1:2.20. Therefore it could be simpler/cheaper for them to master it in W/S (1:1.85) and apply the black borders."

Is it now the consequence of the wonderful age of digital cinema projection that we can no longer experience our cinematic heritage in the format and ratio that it was originally made? I wonder what Kubrick would think?

Mark Ashby, by email

HIDDEN ROOTS

Many thanks to Pasquale Iannone for his article 'The Roots of Neorealism' (S&S, May). May I suggest a possible 13th title that may have "inspired, influenced and/or anticipated neorealism"? The film is *People of the Mountains* (*Emberék a havason*) by the Hungarian director Istvan Szots, which was shown at the 1942 Venice Festival and impressed a number of critics, many of whom were later to be associated with neorealism. A chapter devoted to this film can be found in *The Cinema of Central Europe* (edited by Peter Hames) in Wallflower's 24 Frames series.

John Cunningham, Adlington, Lancashire

PROBLEMATIC HEROES

It was interesting to read Brad Stevens's article (Bradlands, S&S, May) arguing that much 1980s cinema explored the pitfalls of the conventional Hollywood hero in response to "right-wing fantasies: *Top Gun*, the Rambo, Indiana Jones, *Lethal Weapon*, *Back to the Future* and *Die Hard* series". The problem with this argument is that, firstly, *First Blood*, featuring Stallone's Rambo, is hardly a right-wing film, depicting as it does the battle-scarred soldier unable to adjust to civilian life. Similarly, the Riggs character in *Lethal Weapon* is genuinely suicidal and this illustrates the negativity of the Vietnam experience as much as the characters in, say, *Cutter's Way*. Secondly, pigeonholing films such as the *The Shining* and

LETTER OF THE MONTH

HANG IT ALL



I was surprised at how much detail was provided on the BBFC certificate card for François Ozon's 'In the House' (above) and wondered if there is a need for spoiler alerts in future. Announcing to the audience that a film contains a "scene of hanging" is surely too descriptive. That said, the additional plot information provided a welcome distraction from the dull second half of the film. Ozon's latest is too smug at its own structural cleverness to be enjoyable. All those lectures

on narrative causality and protagonist motivation effectively disengage audience attention, something the French literature teacher was at pains for his young student to avoid. As a result, I spent the last hour pondering the BBFC card and predicting narrative threads for the potential hanging victim. This is ironic when you realise that audience engagement in narrative structure is exactly what the film wanted to achieve.

Paul Skillen, Belfast

Manhunter as being about "the problems of the hero" in the context of traditional modes of American masculinity is a bit like saying Hannibal Lecter's character represents a negative view of doctors in the context of medical ethics.

Would it not be more realistic to view *Scarface* and *Once upon a Time in America* as being about the problems of gangsterism rather than about masculinity per se? To suggest the films discussed represented a "coherent oppositional movement" to traditional American projections of the male hero is to oversimplify the actual content of the films.

Duncan Roberts, by email

DANCER ON THE CEILING

With the exception of Busby Berkeley, I've always thought that the true auteurs of the US movie musical during the classical studio years were the stars – particularly those three brilliant talents Fred Astaire, Judy Garland and Gene Kelly – rather than the directors. The onscreen personalities are certainly more affectionately remembered today; which makes it all the stranger that Sam Davies, when mentioning the gravity-defying 'You're All the World to Me' number from *Royal Wedding* ('Eye Tunes', S&S, May 2013), gets the name of the director correct (Stanley Donen) but the performer wrong (it was Astaire, not Kelly). Nonetheless, a very good article, and I'd like to thank Sam for noting the Bob Fosse-choreographed 'Mexican Breakfast' number.

I hadn't heard of this before, let alone seen it, so I checked it out on the internet. It's from a 1969 episode of *The Ed Sullivan Show* – and it's terrific!

Alan Maughan, by email

SETTLING 'SCORE'

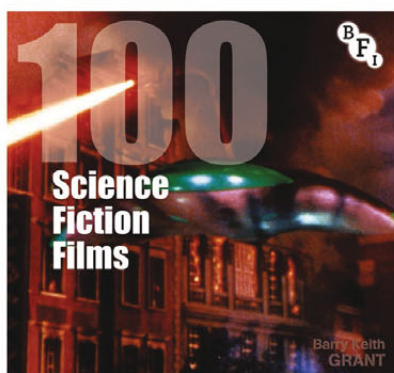
'Sauce Material' (Home Cinema, S&S, May) refers to the BBFC rejecting the uncut version of Radley Metzger's film *Score*. While it is true that a version of the film was originally refused classification for cinema release back in 1974, on its most recent submission to the BBFC the distributor was offered the option of taking an R18 without cuts or an 18 after 2 minutes 3 seconds of cuts to remove sight of unsimulated fellatio. In the event the distributor chose to submit a more heavily edited US version of the film that removed the unsimulated fellatio, as well as other elements to which the BBFC had not objected at 18. However, other than the 1974 submission of the work, no other version of the work has been "rejected" by the BBFC.

Catherine Anderson,
Press & Public Relations Officer, BBFC

Additions and corrections

May p.86 *All Stars*, Cert U, 106m 18s, 9,567 ft +0 frames, Aspect ratio: 1.85:1; p.88 *Bernie*, Cert 12A, 99m 23s, 8,944 ft +8 frames; p.91 *The Eye of the Storm*, Cert 15, 118m 47s, 10,690 ft +8 frames; p.93 *Flying Blind*, Cert 15, 93m 27s, 8,410 ft +8 frames; p.96 *The Hardy Bucks Movie*, Cert 15, 89m 14s, 8,031 ft +0 frames; p.96 *I'm So Excited*, Cert 15, 90m 0s, 8,100 ft +0 frames; p. 80 *In the Fog*, Cert 12A, 128m 5s, 11,527 ft +8 frames; p. 99 *The Look of Love*, Aspect ratio: 2.35:1; p.102 *Promised Land*, Cert 15, 106m 53s, 9,619 ft +8 frames; p.104 *Simon Killer*, Cert 18, 101m 23s, 9,124 ft +8 frames; p. 109 *White Elephant*, Cert 15

Read

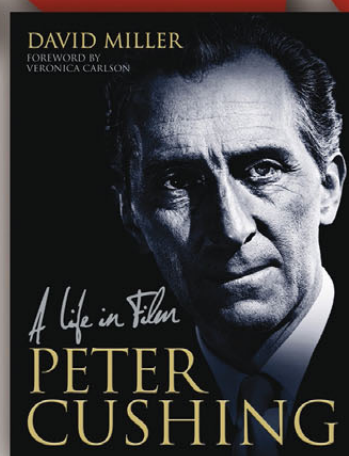


100 SCIENCE FICTION FILMS

By Barry Keith Grant, BFI Publishing/Palgrave Macmillan, 256pp, paperback, illustrated, £16.99, ISBN 9781844574575

An essential guide to 100 of the best SF films ever made. Beautifully illustrated with images from the films, this covers the most important examples of the genre from 1950s B movies to modern-day blockbusters. It includes the best films from around the globe, covering everything from alien invasion to space travel, from time travel to apocalypse. With an in-depth exploration of each film, this is an engaging, reliable overview for science fiction fans everywhere. See which of your favourites are included, look again at titles you may have overlooked and maybe make some new discoveries.

www.palgrave.com/bfi

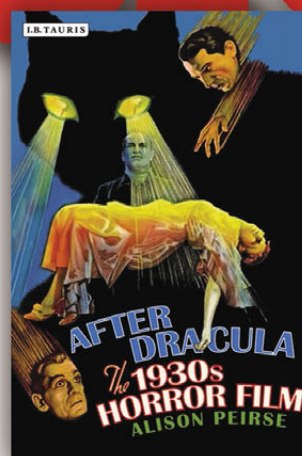


PETER CUSHING: A LIFE IN FILM

By David Miller, Titan Books, 208pp, hardback, illustrated, £18.99, ISBN 9781781162743

From *Dracula* to *Star Wars* and beyond, Peter Cushing was an unforgettable presence in cult cinema of the 1950s, 60s and 70s. He remains, 100 years after his birth, one of Britain's best-loved film stars. Author David Miller has written a definitive guide to the stage and screen career of a legendary star, drawing on conversations with Cushing's friends and colleagues, archive material held by the BBC and Hammer Film Productions, and previously unpublished correspondence with Cushing himself. "Films, stage and television... it's all covered in David Miller's excellent companion which details Cushing's 60-year career." — *Total Film*

www.titanbooks.com



AFTER DRACULA: The 1930s Horror Film

By Alison Peirse, I.B. Tauris, 224pp, paperback, £16.99, ISBN 9781848855311

After Dracula tells of films set in London music halls and Yorkshire coal mines, South Sea islands and Hungarian modernist houses of horror, with narrators whose positions in space and time range from contemporary Paris to ancient Egypt. Alison Peirse argues that *Dracula* (1931) has been canonised to the detriment of other innovative and original 1930s horror films made in Europe and America. She reveals a cycle of films made over the 1930s that includes *Werewolf of London*, *The Man Who Changed His Mind*, *Island of Lost Souls* and *Vampyr*. This historical account reveals wide disparities in horror filmmaking during the 1930s and brings to light many titles that have been forgotten and unloved — until now.

www.ibtaurisc.com



BRIGITTE BARDOT

By Ginette Vincendeau, BFI Publishing/Palgrave Macmillan, 184pp, paperback, £12.99, ISBN 9781844574926

Ginette Vincendeau explores Bardot's image of femininity, her film career and her lasting and controversial celebrity status. Exploring the star's work — including popular comedies and melodramas, work with New Wave directors Louis Malle and Jean-Luc Godard, and international productions such as *Dear Brigitte* (1965) and *Shalako* (1968) — Vincendeau shows how Bardot's enduring fame is based on her status as a sexual, lifestyle, musical and fashion role model, and as an icon of French national identity. Finally, she considers the ageing Bardot's continued prominence in popular culture, arguing that, as well as a glamorous film star, Bardot was one of the inventors of modern celebrity.

www.palgrave.com/bfi

new wave films on DVD



Available on DVD and download 13 May

● Includes documentary on Bruno Dumont and the sound-mix

Order from amazon.co.uk

Hors Satan Bruno Dumont

A mysterious drifter played by the late David Dewaele prays, poaches and occasionally solves problems faced by the locals with violence or some kind of exorcism. A character beyond God or Satan – this is Bruno Dumont's universe, here in *Hors Satan* in its most distilled and unsettling form.

★★★★★

'Dumont's film-making is just so fluent, unnerving, gripping; he is entirely unique'

**Peter Bradshaw
The Guardian**

'Probably his greatest film, it's a brilliant distillation of his customary themes... It shows Dumont is world-class, right at the top of his game.'

**Kieron Corless
Sight & Sound**

★★★★★

'Mesmerising, beatific, disturbing.'

Trevor Johnston, Time Out

'We think it's kinda brilliant.'

**David Jenkins
Little White Lies**



Available on DVD and download 27 May

● Includes an exclusive interview with Cristi Puiu

www.newwavefilms.co.uk

Aurora Cristi Puiu

The follow-up to *The Death of Mr Lazarescu* is the ultimate slow-burn film, following the apparently banal life of a man, played by Puiu himself, whose nervousness and unease is gradually revealed as the prelude to revenge.

★★★★★

'A technical and emotional tour-de force. A great addition to the so-called Romanian New Wave'

**David Jenkins
Little White Lies**

'This quotidian portrait of a man contemplating violence builds in the mind... Cinema's own *Crime and Punishment*.'

**Nick James
Sight & Sound**

★★★★★

'One of the most distinctive artists working in the cinema anywhere today... Puiu's special approach ensures that *Aurora* rings unusually true. Superb stuff.'

**Geoff Andrew,
Time Out**

Latest Publications from FIAF

Journal of Film Preservation



PURCHASE THE CURRENT OR BACK ISSUES OR SUBSCRIBE AT www.fiafnet.org

The *Journal of Film Preservation* is published by the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) twice a year. It offers a forum for both general and specialized discussions on all theoretical, technical and historical aspects of moving image archival activities. Articles are written in English, French or Spanish, with summaries in the other two languages.

IN THIS ISSUE

OPEN FORUM The Digital Future of Pre-Digital Collections | Collection Building & Programming in the Future | The Walsh Restoration Threshold | Challenges for European Film Heritage from the Analogue and Digital Era | The Media History Digital Archive • **HISTORY** First Tango in Paris: The Birth of FIAF, 1936-38 | FIAF Oral History interview: Robert Rosen | In Search of POST (Soviet animation) • **ARCHIVES AT WORK** Digital Acquisition at the BFI | Early Pathé Negatives | Toute la mémoire du monde – a new Paris festival • **BOOKS & DVDs**

FIAF Digital Projection Guide



ORDER NOW amazon.co.uk

The *FIAF Digital Projection Guide* addresses the technical challenges that cinémathèques, archival and repertory cinemas and festivals encounter in the paradigm change from analogue film projection to digital cinema. The guide is an extension of, and update to, *The Advanced Projection Manual* (2006), a book covering the craft of projecting film classics with modern equipment.

THE FIAF DIGITAL PROJECTION GUIDE COVERS THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

- * What is D-cinema, and what are the alternatives?
- * Pixel – the digital picture element
- * The DCP file format
- * Digital projection systems
- * 3-D projection technology
- * Sound for digital cinema
- * Practical advice for digital conversions

More information on FIAF publications at www.fiafnet.org/uk/publications

fiaf75
1938 - 2013

Reviews



108 **The Stone Roses: Made of Stone**

Avoiding sheer hagiography, Shane Meadows makes it his task as a Roses devotee to capture the atmosphere of expectation and catharsis, producing a documentary which is more loveably shaggy and real than the recent Rolling Stones reunion equivalent



82 Films of the month



90 Films



110 Home Cinema



122 Books



Make 'em laugh: Edward Hogg as aspiring stand-up Ed in Tom Shkolnik's debut feature 'The Comedian'

The Comedian

United Kingdom/France/Russia 2012

Director: Tom Shkolnik

Certificate 15 78m 37s

See
industry
section,
page 20

Reviewed by Ben Walters

It is a truth universally acknowledged that funny men are crying inside. The cinematic archetype of stand-up as sad-sack will probably always

be Rupert Pupkin, the dangerously deluded aspiring comic played by Robert De Niro in Martin Scorsese's *The King of Comedy* (1982). That film essentially reprised as farce the tragic trajectory and alienated concerns of the pair's earlier collaboration, *Taxi Driver* (1976). While the character of Pupkin, with his medley of manic bravado, maudlin self-pity and mindless cruelty, could in many ways be seen as the goofy twin of Travis Bickle, he has attained semi-mythic status as a template for cinema's vision of the crap comedian as the ultimate loser.

Of course, there's plenty of biographical evidence to suggest that troubled minds and negative characteristics aren't unusual among even the funniest and most successful of real-life comics. In his own feature *Jo Jo Dancer, Your Life Is Calling* (1986), Richard Pryor played an entertainer not unlike himself, with a history of growing up in a brothel, engaging in compulsive sex and burning himself while freebasing cocaine. The grim side of creating laughter is of perennial, self-critiquing interest to professionals in the field: the behaviour of both Billy Crystal's Buddy Young Jr in *Mr Saturday Night* (1992), which Crystal directed, and Adam Sandler's George Simmons in Judd Apatow's *Funny People* (2009), who shares certain aspects of Sandler's own career, oscillates between depressed and obnoxious, while more recent comedians who

play comedians on TV, such as Garry Shandling (*The Larry Sanders Show*), Larry David (*Curb Your Enthusiasm*) and Louis C.K. (*Louie*), offer similarly mixed, neurotic portraits. Even Tom Hanks was a bit of a shit in *Punchline* (1988).

Tom Shkolnik's feature debut *The Comedian* could be seen in the context of this lineage. Its central character Ed (Edward Hogg) exhibits a moderate version of the cycle of self-aggrandising, self-critiquing, self-destructive behaviour familiar from many of the films above. It's hard to tell whether Ed is a very good comedian, however, because unlike many of those films, *The Comedian* isn't at all interested in the ideology or mechanics of stand-up comedy performance. We see Ed on stage for a total of only a couple of minutes; his material (devised by Hogg himself) isn't terribly impressive as comedy but tells us a good amount about his anger, which is apt because what *The Comedian* is very interested in is the emotional terrain of a thirtysomething man in a bit of a tailspin. Ed shares an intimate friendship with his flatmate Elisa (Elisa Lasowski),

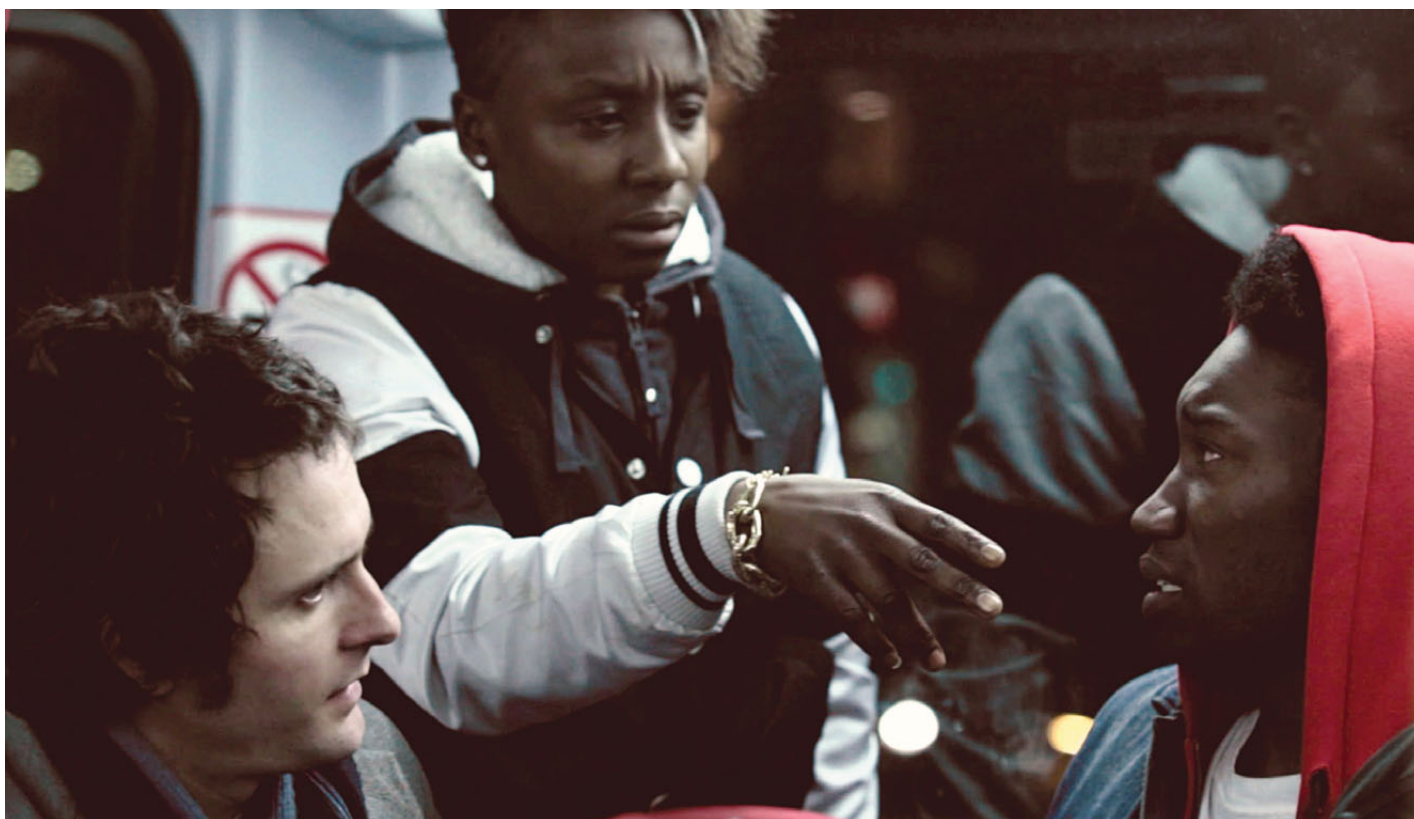
a French singer, and embarks on a romantic relationship with Nathan (Nathan Stewart-Jarrett), a 25-year-old artist. The maintenance of both these connections demands mental and emotional resources that Ed struggles to supply; nor does he prove well suited to his day job at a call centre, selling cancer insurance.

In fact, *The Comedian* sits just as readily in the lineage of recent films taking a broadly naturalistic perspective on the emotional and psychological challenges of alienated late-capitalist identity; post-Cassavetes pictures such as *Half Nelson* (2006), *Blue Valentine* (2010) or the mumblecore cycle come to mind here.

"I wanted to make a film about a London I could recognise, about people who were poor but not starving, black but not gang members, gay but not camp"



The London everybody knows: Elisa (Elisa Lasowski, centre) on a night out with friends



Ed and Nathan (Nathan Stewart-Jarrett) run into homophobic trouble on the night-bus

In production, Shkolnik built on the technique he developed for his shorts *In the Dark* and *One Happy Moment*, including a lengthy rehearsal period, improvised performances, using available locations and allowing himself only one shot per take. "I wanted to make a film about a London that I could recognise," he has said, "about people who were poor but not starving, living on estates but not in council housing, who were foreign but not asylum seekers, black but not gang members, gay but not camp." Shooting handheld and close to the ground in everyday London locations, he captures a credible sense of the city as it feels today, especially at night, from the crumpled-leather ambience of DJ bars and the steamed-up, fluorescent greasiness of late-night takeaways to the peculiarly public-private quality of top-deck night-bus journeys and their potential for eroticism and violence.

Two such journeys offer perhaps the film's strongest sequences. One shows the first conversation between Ed and Nathan following a mediocre performance by the former at a comedy night. "You're much funnier on the bus," the latter tells him, and the chat plays out with a convincing mix of flirtation, engagement and conversational dead ends. Another journey later in the film sees Ed, Nathan and Elisa sharing the top deck with a group of teenage girls, and the scene deftly navigates the situation's gradual transition from ostensible nocturnal camaraderie to something more threatening, not only to the central characters' physical security but also to the dynamic between them.

The Comedian is impressively alert to the power of the unspoken. The whole cast is quietly expressive of shifting, ambivalent feelings – Stewart-Jarrett shows a complexity absent from his performance in TV's *Misfits*; Gerard Murphy, as Ed's father, conveys a constellation of concerns in a brief family dinner scene – and while Ed and Nathan's arguments are mostly verbal, the

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Bertrand Faivre
Dan McCulloch
Written by
Tom Shkolnik
Director of Photography
Benjamin Kracun
Editor
Pierre Haberer
Production Designer
Marie Lanna
Sound Recordist
Howard Peryer

©The British Film Institute/The Bureau
Production Companies
BFI and The Bureau
present a The Bureau production

In association with
Celluloid Dreams,
Trinity Filmed
Entertainment,
Plan2Real, Le
Petit Bureau
Developed with the
support of the MEDIA
Programme of the
European Union
Made with the
support of the
BFI's Film Fund

Cast

Edward Hogg
Ed
Elisa Lasowski
Elisa
Nathan Stewart-Jarrett
Nathan

Steven Robertson
Steven
Jamie Baughan
Gerard Murphy
Kate Rutter
Caolan Byrne
Nyasha Hatendi
Azara Meghie

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Trinity Filmed
Entertainment

7,075 ft +8 frames

London, present day. Ed is a 32-year-old aspiring stand-up comedian who works in a call centre during the day, trying to sell health insurance. He shares a flat with Elisa, a French singer-songwriter with whom he has an intimate friendship. Following a gig, he meets 25-year-old artist Nathan on a bus, and the two begin a romantic relationship. Things don't go entirely smoothly: at the end of a night out with Elisa and other friends, Ed becomes jealous of Nathan's rapport with them and leaves without saying goodbye, upsetting both Nathan and Elisa. Elisa admits that she has romantic feelings for Ed and they kiss. Ed apologises to Nathan. Ed's work hasn't been going well; his manager Jamie gives him some workshop exercises to help improve his performance but Ed continues to struggle. Eventually Jamie tells him that he will lose his job unless he does better and Ed storms out. Following a traumatic encounter with homophobic teenage girls on a bus, Nathan and Ed fall out, partly because of Ed and Elisa's relationship. Elisa, still upset, asks Ed to move out of the flat. Ed visits his parents in Sheffield and has a family meal. On his return to London, he has a conversation with a minicab driver in which each man talks about the problems he confronts. The driver tells Ed that he'll be all right, and Ed agrees.

moments suggestive of their connection are gestural: fingers play with fingers, a foot brushes a face in the bath. When tensions arise between Ed and all the other main characters, essentially because of his difficulty in dealing with the situations he gets himself into, the resulting disputes are handled with judicious moderation, inviting sympathy rather than scorn or pity. Ed knows himself well enough to understand when he's fucked up, and those with whom he argues are seen to be neither monsters nor saints. When he fights with Nathan in the street, the camera swings from left to right as if watching tennis; when Elisa confronts him about his exploitation of her feelings for him, his tears are of honest self-recrimination; when his boss (Jamie Baughan) pulls him up for underperforming at work, the complaint is reasonably expressed and, at least to start with, maturely received.

Within this naturalistic pedigree, *The Comedian* should perhaps be considered alongside other recent features about gay characters confronting nuanced psychological situations with ambivalent results. In titles such as Andrew Haigh's *Weekend* (2011), Ira Sachs's *Keep the Lights On* (2012), Travis Mathews's *I Want Your Love* (2012) and – anticipating *The Comedian*'s use of contemporary East London locations – Kanchi Wichmann's *Break My Fall* (2011), characters aren't preoccupied with acute crises such as coming out, dealing with Aids or combating legal injustice. The focus instead is on the challenge of navigating atomised 21st-century society with the added complication of queer sexuality. *The Comedian* stands alongside those films in staking out a new terrain of queer storytelling which tends towards neither triumph nor martyrdom but rather the mundane, often underexpressed recognition – to which sexuality in itself is irrelevant – that life today is often quite hard, happiness and fulfilment are elusive and fleeting, and sometimes, well, there just isn't much to laugh about. **S**

The Reluctant Fundamentalist

USA/India/Qatar 2012

Director: Mira Nair

Certificate 15 130m 11s

Reviewed by Naman Ramachandran

Mira Nair's best works have often been those set in a South Asian milieu, as evidenced by *Salaam Bombay* (1988) and *Monsoon Wedding* (2001). Her literary adaptations have been a mixed bag: the England-set *Vanity Fair* (2004), based on William Makepeace Thackeray's 19th-century satire, and the US-set *Amelia* (2009), which drew on Amelia Earhart biographies by Susan Butler and Mary S. Lovell, were both coolly received, whereas her 2006 film of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, set among South Asian immigrants in America, met a more enthusiastic welcome. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, adapted from Mohsin Hamid's 2007 book, sees Nair return to familiar South Asian climes and is a rarity – a tense thriller that also manages to provoke thought.

The tragic events of 9/11 and their aftermath have been seen, both directly and tangentially, from a Western point of view in a number of films, notably *September 11* (a portmanteau picture by 11 directors, including Nair), *United 93*, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, *World Trade Center*, *Reign over Me*, *Day Night Day Night*, *25th Hour*, *Remember Me*, *The 9/11 Commission Report* and *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* to name just a few. From a South Asian perspective, there have been several well-meaning but ultimately heavyhanded and loudly melodramatic efforts, including *My Name Is Khan* (2010) and *New York* (2009), both from India, and *Khuda Kay Liye* (2007) from Pakistan. Such films usually depict American officials as belligerent boors and the brown-skinned protagonists as victims – a portrayal that ranges from the laughably bad to the downright offensive in the case of *I Am Singh* (2011).

In telling the story of Changez Khan, a Pakistani-born Ivy League graduate living the American Dream – with a cushy job at a sought-after consulting firm and an aristocratic white girlfriend on his arm – until post-9/11 prejudice and his own inner conflicts catch up with him, Nair doesn't take sides and maintains impeccable balance. Unlike *My Name Is Khan*, where the protagonist is strip-searched by

pantomime American security, here when a similar fate befalls Changez, it is subdued and underplayed and all the more chilling for that.

The book, and the film's framing device, is an extended conversation between Changez and American journalist Bobby (Liev Schreiber), who is convinced that Changez is a radical. Nair keeps us guessing about Changez's true affiliation until the very end, and this works hugely in the film's favour. When he deadpans (prior to 9/11), "In 25 years, I'm going to be dictator of an Islamic republic with nuclear capability," his colleagues don't know whether he's joking or not. Changez is an oddity, on the one hand a ruthless corporate businessman who thinks nothing of rendering hundreds of people jobless with a stroke of his pen, and on the other a good son bound by filial duty, but who experiences awe at the fall of the Twin Towers. "The ruthlessness of the act was surpassed only by its genius. David had struck Goliath," says Changez. The role requires a tremendous performance, and Riz Ahmed – a British actor on the rise after *Shifty* (2008), *Four Lions* (2010) and *Trishna* (2011) – delivers on this, only his eyes revealing the conflict in an otherwise carefully controlled exterior.

This conflict isn't so much in evidence prior to 9/11, when Changez is depicted as a typically hardworking first-generation immigrant with ambitions to make managing director by the age of 30. His chemistry-free relationship and awkward couplings with Erica (Kate Hudson) actually work in the film's favour, since it's revealed early on that she is recovering from her fiancé's death and just happens to be the niece of one of the firm's partners; when she subsequently mines their relationship without Changez's knowledge, using it as the subject of an art installation, it's as if they are both using each other.

Changez also has three father figures in the film and in their own ways they add texture to his character. His relationship with his actual father is strained at best – Abu (Om Puri) is an aristocrat and a poet who's not as affluent as he used to be and who disapproves of his son's heartless American job. Altogether more chilling is Kiefer Sutherland as Changez's boss and mentor Jim, who recognises his protégé's initial drive and ambition but is quick to cut him dead when he displays any sign of softness. And then there is Nazmi Kemal (played with scenery-chewing



Loosening old ties: Riz Ahmed as Changez Khan

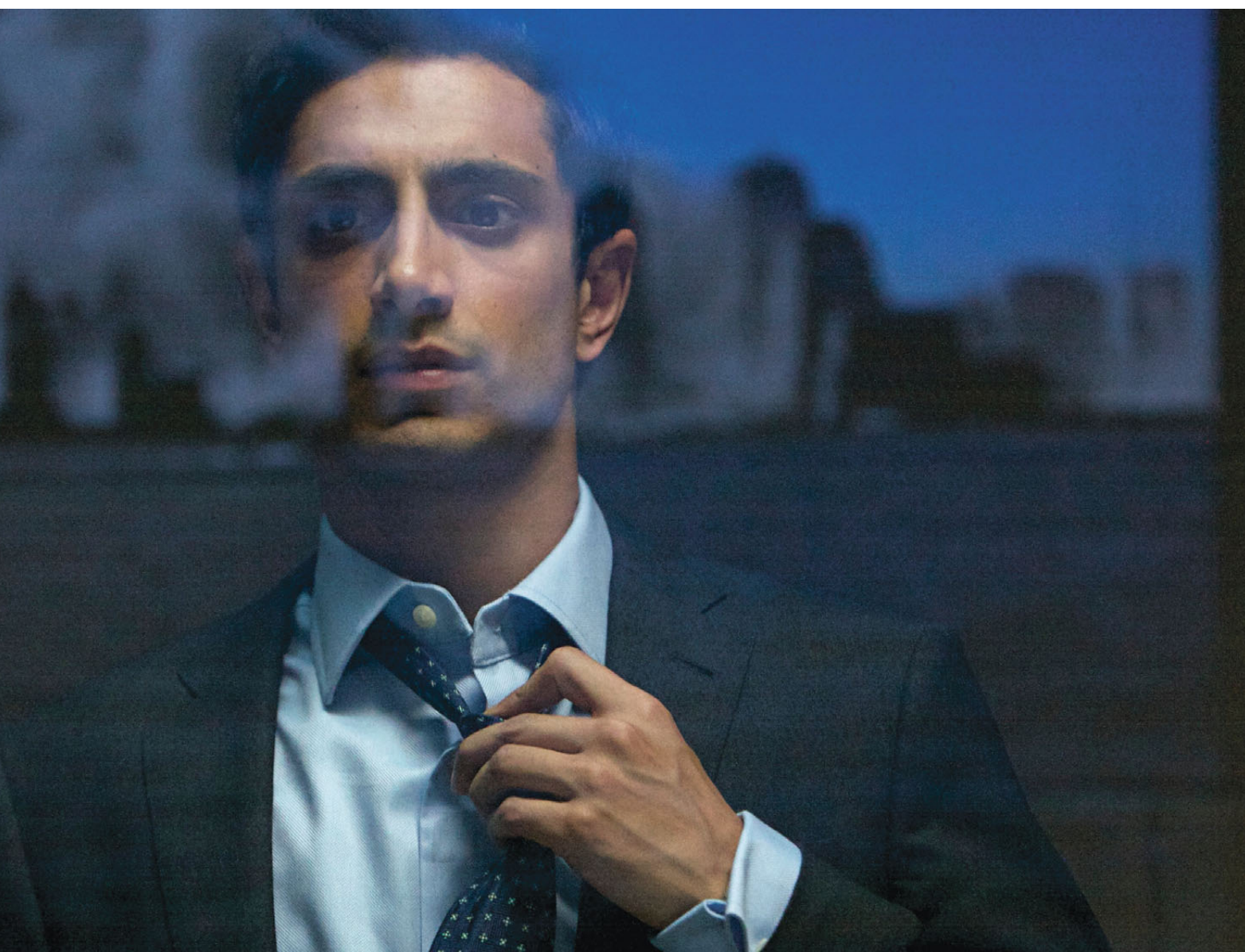
gusto by Turkish actor Haluk Bilginer), the owner of an Istanbul bookshop about to get shut down by Jim, who leads Changez to seek his inner truth.

After 9/11, in the face of rising and obvious Islamophobia, Changez – his affinity for his roots now externalised with a beard – returns home to Pakistan to become a lecturer, and finds an atmosphere even more febrile than the one he left years earlier. The university where he teaches is a microcosm of the country, and Nair excels in creating this world – even though the production mostly had to recreate Pakistan in India, with only second-unit shots completed in Pakistan itself (Michael Winterbottom had to do much the same with parts of *A Mighty Heart*). Aided by some terrific production design, Nair evokes a world in turmoil, where the desire of most students is to emigrate – Changez's sister Bina (Meesha Shafi) is more than happy to ditch her local acting

The role requires a tremendous performance, and Riz Ahmed delivers on this, only his eyes revealing the conflict in an otherwise controlled exterior



Changez, with boss and mentor Jim (Kiefer Sutherland), comes up against post-9/11 security



career and fly off to the States to swoon over Mr Big as an ethnic friend on *Sex and the City*. Nair skilfully contrasts this desire to leave, caused mostly by the threat of radicalism, kidnapping and the possibility of sudden violence, with Changez's own gradual return to his roots.

The film does suffer from jumping back and forth between Pakistan and other countries, but editor Shimit Amin keeps the narrative lucid. And although on the face of it the film is balanced about its point of view, Nair and regular cinematographer Declan Quinn give the agenda away somewhat with their choice of colour palette: New York is presented as a cold, bleak place with hushed interiors, especially post 9/11, whereas Lahore is bursting with warmth, vitality, conviviality, food and music, even if the threat of a riot is palpable. Moreover, apart from Bobby, Jim and Erica, who have some depth written into their characters, the secondary Americans are identikit, parachuted in from central casting, in contrast to the rich hues in which even the most minor Pakistanis are painted. These are, however, minor flaws in what is an important addition to the body of post-9/11 discourse. And it is difficult to quibble with any film that has on its soundtrack a Peter Gabriel interpretation of the verses of Pakistani poetry legend Faiz Ahmed Faiz. 📺

Credits and Synopsis

Producer
Lydia Dean Pilcher
Screenplay
William Wheeler
Screen Story
Mohsin Hamid
Ami Boghani
Based on the novel
by Mohsin Hamid
**Director of
Photography**
Declan Quinn

Editor
Shimit Amin
Production Designer
Michael Carlin
Composer
Michael Andrews
Sound Mixers
Mark Cornish
Vivek Sachidanand
Costume Designer
Arjun Bhasin

©The Reluctant Film
Company, LLC
**Production
Companies**
IFC Films and
Doha Film Institute
present a Mirabai
Films and Cine
Mosaic production
A Mira Nair film
Executive Producer
Hani Farsi

Cast
Riz Ahmed
Changez Khan
Liev Schreiber
Robert Lincoln,
'Bobby'
Kate Hudson
Erica
Kiefer Sutherland
Jim Cross
Om Puri
Abu

Shabana Azmi
Ammi
Martin Donovan
Ludlow Cooper
Nelsan Ellis
Wainwright
Haluk Bilginer
Nazmi Kemal
Meesha Shafi
Bina
Imaad Shah
Sameer

Chris Smith
Mike Rizzo

In Colour
[2.35:1]
Part-subtitled

Distributor
Mara Pictures

11,716 ft +8 frames

Lahore, Pakistan, the mid-2000s. When an American university professor is kidnapped, the local CIA unit suspects the involvement of lecturer Changez Khan. Lahore-based American journalist Robert Lincoln is sent to engage in conversation with Changez, in the guise of an interview, in order to glean clues about the professor's whereabouts. Changez asks Lincoln to listen to the story of his life.

The film flashes back to the late 1990s, when Changez leaves Pakistan to join an Ivy League university to study management. He graduates and is hired by a New York consulting firm, where he shows great aptitude for streamlining ailing businesses through redundancies. He rises quickly in the organisation and is promoted to associate. He begins a relationship with photographer Erica, his boss's niece. After the 9/11 attacks, however, the attitude of Changez's colleagues

suddenly changes towards him. He is strip-searched at the airport, and is detained by police in a case of mistaken identity. Matters worsen after he refuses to shave off the beard he's grown on a trip back to Pakistan for his sister's wedding. His relationship with Erica ends when he realises that she has used pictures of their life together, without his knowledge, as the subject of an art installation. While on a trip to Istanbul to close down a venerable publisher, Changez has an epiphany: he quits his job, returns to Lahore and begins teaching.

During his conversation with Lincoln, Changez reveals that he knows that his interlocutor and the kidnapped professor are both CIA agents. A riot breaks out in the city and Lincoln, at gunpoint, uses Changez to escape from an anti-American mob. Once safe in the car, Lincoln is told by CIA colleagues that Changez had nothing to do with the professor's disappearance.

Something in the Air

France 2011

Director: Olivier Assayas

Certificate 15 121m 59s

See feature
on page 46

Reviewed by Jonathan Romney

Since its completion, Olivier Assayas's wistful *Something in the Air* has acquired additional layers of loss and regret. The film is dedicated to the director's

filmmaker friend, the late Laurent Perrin, while its editor Luc Barnier, a long-term Assayas associate, also died last year. The film's final sequence is set to a number by British avant-rockers Kevin Ayers, who died this February. All this gives *Something in the Air* a surplus of nostalgic poignancy. Assayas's reminiscence of the early 1970s (following his 2005 autobiographical text *A Post-May Adolescence*) might recall the last words of *Sentimental Education*, as Flaubert's characters Frédéric and Deslauriers, remembering their youth in turbulent times, remark: "That was the best thing we ever had."

In Flaubert's novel, these words carry a bitter charge, as Frédéric has failed to understand the historical urgency of the times he's sleepwalked through. By contrast, Assayas's student hero (and counterpart) Gilles very consciously lives his epoch to the full, in all its complexity and contradiction. *Something in the Air* looks back to the early 70s as, if not a lost paradise, at least a lost hotbed of infinite possibilities, and if the film is nostalgic, this is a nostalgia well earned. Assayas depicts a culturally and politically vibrant era made and lived through by intelligent, sensitive beings taking full advantage of their moment.

There is nothing glibly distancing about Assayas's treatment of the period – which comes as a shock, given the way that British and American films about this era almost routinely use caricature to defuse their embarrassment at bygone idealism and stylistic exuberance. It's bracing to see how Assayas respects the genuine experimentalism of the time – treating, say, a spacy improv-rock concert with liquid light show not as a grisly efflorescence of *baba-cool* hippie-ism, but as a vivid and valid manifestation of arts-lab culture.

The film's English title – with its nod to the 1969 Thunderclap Newman hit, not featured on the soundtrack – alludes to the mood of a certain time, to something new about to emerge. However, the original French title, *Après mai* ('After May'), suggests a theme of aftermath, of a generation arriving on the scene just too late – the film depicts the younger siblings of the Class of 68, their political passion coming to the boil three years after France's national ferment failed to bring about the hoped-for *tabula rasa*.

No less than their immediate elders, Assayas's heroes are caught in the crossfire of ideological divisions. As we see early on, anyone standing up to make a point at a meeting runs the risk of being shouted down as a Trotskyite or worse, while older militants disapprove of the agitprop language of the younger radicals: one veteran activist tut-tuts at the schoolkids' penchant for sexually provocative imagery. Nor would the radical old guard have had much time for the burgeoning cause of women's liberation. It's a lesson Gilles's fellow radical Christine learns as she joins up with – and becomes dogsbody to – a group of macho cine-militants. Assayas himself



Radical rethink: Clément Métayer and Lola Créton as Gilles and Christine in 'Something in the Air'

has noted in interviews that old-school French Marxists, committed to proletarian victory, regarded the artistic and moral transformations of the 60s as so much petit-bourgeois distraction, and the personal liberations offered by pop culture as counter-revolutionary if anything. Gilles is irresistibly drawn to pop and to a whole spectrum of artistic and poetic activity. The political movements that attract him do so as channels of self-expression: Assayas has said that he was himself drawn to vital but ephemeral sites of political activity, short-lived groups such as VLR (Vive la révolution) and the FLJ (Youth Liberation Front), to which Gilles belongs.

Ephemerality, intensity and sudden change are bound to be of the essence in serious films about youth, hence this film's theme of combustibility. Early on, the young militants throw Molotov cocktails at school guards; later, one of them takes part in the burning of a car, in an obscure guerrilla operation. In the heat of emotion, Gilles burns one of his drawings; elsewhere, he reads a poem from Gregory Corso's collection *Gasoline*, later burning that page. And Gilles's ex-girlfriend Laure is apparently killed in a fire at a stoned house party. This is a dazzling set piece, the camera wandering after Laure through house and garden, where a haystack is alight, up to the abrupt ending, flames bursting through a doorway as a Soft Machine track hits its climax. This mesmerising sequence, demonstrating

Assayas's characteristic fluency in coordinating camera and music, recalls a similarly fiery party in *L'Eau froide*, which Assayas made in 1994, aged 39, when he could still be considered a representative of 'young French cinema'. To echo it now is to emphasise the sense of recollecting lost days.

Yet it is not a matter of looking back from a knowing position of age and wisdom. Assayas in no way presents these young people's adventures as callow follies. If anything, he's indulgent towards them. It's easy to forget, for much of the film, that his heroes have unthinkingly been involved in actions resulting in a man's injury – something for which, later, the victim isn't ready to forgive them. In fact, the sole concern of Gilles and co has been to escape to Italy and forget the incident – which the film itself largely does in the meantime, focusing on their amorous idylls or discoveries of agitprop cinema and the Afghan hippie trail.

The repercussions of Gilles's action constitute the only blind spot for a character who is otherwise strikingly lucid. "I live in my fantasies," he anxiously admits. "When reality knocks, I don't open." Acutely self-conscious, Gilles envies the bohemian Laure, who lives day to day, while he admits, "I'm afraid to miss out on my youth." But for this nascent artist, it's important to be creatively awake and active, rather than lose himself in the rush of either hedonism or history. It's vitality itself that finally prevails (near the



From the patterns of the tie-dye T-shirts to the whine of the prog-rock synths, Assayas has recreated the styles of the period in a way that is tenderly rather than reverently spot-on

end, Gilles reads the Situationist dictum, "The demand for life has become a revolutionary programme") and the film comes out strongly for the virtue of being true to yourself (or, in the more philosophically skewed French word, *cohérent*).

A loose, episodic narrative provides a framework for a remarkably dense set of period references, taking in specific political groups and incidents, developments in contemporary art, post-psychedelic musical styles and

various types of cinema – from agitprop documentary to the ludicrous lost-world romp that Gilles ends up working on at Pinewood.

During the Italian trip, following the screening of a documentary about Laos, one viewer asks, "Shouldn't revolutionary cinema use revolutionary syntax?" To which someone else retorts that revolutionary style is itself a petit-bourgeois conceit (a characteristic aesthetic-ideological catch-22 of the period). Assayas's own style in this feature is neither revolutionary nor to be dismissed as petit-bourgeois art cinema. With its long takes, contemplative fades to black and languorously exalted crane moves, *Something in the Air* belongs to the lyrical-classical wing of Assayas's oeuvre – *Late August, Early September* (1998) and *Summer Hours* (2008) – as opposed to the more confrontational or fractured forms of *Demonlover* (2002) and *Carlos* (2010).

The contradictions are still there to be argued over – some will wonder at Assayas making such a calm, reconciled film about such an angry epoch. But this film's gentler style of fragmentation feels entirely appropriate to the business of recollection at a distance. And, in both visual and sonic terms, from the patterns of the tie-dye T-shirts to the whine of the prog-rock synths, Assayas has recreated the styles of the period in a way that, for once, isn't distorted by retrospective irony, but is tenderly rather than reverently spot-on – in *des images justes*. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Nathanaël Karmitz
Charles Gillibert
Written by
Olivier Assayas
Cinematography
Eric Gautier
Editors
Luc Barnier
Mathilde Van de Moortel
Art Director
François-Renaud Labarthe
Sound
Nicolas Cantin
Costume Designer
Jurgen Doering

@MK2 SA, Vortex
Sutra, France
3 Cinéma
Production Companies
MK2 presents a
France 3 Cinéma/
Vortex Sutra

co-production
With the participation of
France Télévisions,
Canal+, Ciné+ and
Centre National
du Cinéma et de
l'Image Animée
With the support of
Région Île-de-France
In association
with Banque
Postale Image 5
A film produced
by MK2
Film Extracts
Joe Hill (1971)
Laos, images
sauvées (1970)
El Coraje del
pueblo (1971)

Cast
Clément Métayer
Gilles
Lola Créton

Christine
Félix Armand
Alain
Carole Combes
Laure
India Salvor
Menuez
Leslie
Hugo Conzelmann
Jean-Pierre
Martin Loizillon
Red Rackham

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Artificial Eye
Film Company

10,978 ft +8 frames

French theatrical title
Après mai



Winds of change: Félix Armand as Alain and India Salvor Menuez as Leslie

Near Paris, 1971. Gilles, Christine and Alain are teenage school students involved in leftwing activism. Aspiring painter Gilles meets with his girlfriend Laure, who tells him that she is leaving for London. After covering their school with agitprop posters and graffiti, the young radicals take revenge on the security guards who denounced them, leaving one guard in a coma. Student leader 'Rackham the Red' advises them to lie low over the holidays, and Gilles and Christine, now lovers, leave for Italy with Alain, who takes up with American dance student Leslie. Christine travels on with a group of militant filmmakers; Gilles returns to France and art school, and starts working with his TV writer father. Gilles sees Laure again at a house party, shortly before the house goes up in flames. Alain returns from travels with Leslie in Afghanistan. While his friend Jean-Pierre continues to take part in militant actions, Gilles moves away from politics in favour of art and the pop counterculture. Christine walks out on her older lover and his film group. Gilles goes to London to work as assistant on a commercial movie, but still attends experimental film shows.



Fires are started: Mikhail Skryabin in the title role in Alexey Balabanov's 'The Stoker'

The Stoker

Russia 2010

Director: Alexey Balabanov

Certificate 15 87m 24s

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

The first post-Soviet Russian director to gain international prominence, thanks to the contrasting yet complementary one-two punch of *Brother* (1997) and *Of Freaks and Men* (1998), Aleksey Balabanov has dropped off UK distributors' radar over the past decade, with only *Brother 2* (2000) and *War* (2002) playing outside festival screenings despite the director maintaining a consistent creative pace. So it's greatly to the Edinburgh Filmhouse's credit that they're making their theatrical distribution debut with Balabanov's penultimate film to date (he's since made *Me Too*, which premiered in 2012), especially since it turns out to be one of his strongest and most characteristic works.

The Stoker isn't the first film about a man who spends much of his time fuelling a gigantic industrial furnace – Bohumil Hrabal's 1976 novella *Too Loud a Solitude* was adapted twice, as a

Czech feature in 1996 and as an American puppet animation in 2007. But while Hrabal's protagonist Hanta devotes his time to saving banned books from the flames and turning himself into a flesh-and-blood treasure house of human knowledge, Balabanov's Skryabin is only too happy to turn a blind eye to precisely what's being incinerated. Those familiar with Balabanov's earlier work will be unsurprised to hear that this includes clearly fresh human corpses, with Skryabin's former Afghan War colleague Misha



Keeper of the flame: Mikhail Skryabin

glibly explaining that they're criminals who couldn't be touched by the law because they'd bribed the police, an excuse that rings distinctly hollow long before we find out the truth.

The film is set in the lawless 1990s, when Russia was being systematically carved up by oligarchs and the Mafia in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse – the ongoing financial crisis being demonstrated by the difficulty Skryabin has getting paid, and the fact that he then turns all his money over to his daughter Sasha, preferring to sleep on a dingy but rent-free bed in the boiler room itself. The only genuine loyalties on display are those between blood relations and old military colleagues, and the former ultimately trump the latter to devastating effect. Business relationships, whether conducted by the dapper, respectably silver-haired Andrey Sergeevich or by the fur traders Sasha and Masha (the latter being Misha's daughter), are both metaphorically and literally cutthroat, abruptly and often fatally curtailed on the slimmest of pretexts. "How do you know that she's stealing?" asks Misha following an impassioned diatribe by Masha against Sasha. "I'm guessing," she casually replies.

If *The Stoker* is never as relentlessly grim as *Cargo 200* (2007), which infused a similarly bleak

portrait of the fag end of the Soviet Union with the relentlessly clammy immediacy of a 1970s Tobe Hooper flick, it will come as little surprise to anyone even vaguely familiar with Balabanov's oeuvre that the body count is substantial and that almost all the principal characters fail to survive to the end. In this respect, the film is squarely in line with the *Brother* diptych, *War* and the gangster film *Dead Man's Bluff* (2005). But *The Stoker* is also strongly redolent of Balabanov's weirder, more wayward features. Skryabin, whose ethnic origin visibly marks him as an outsider regardless of his status as a former Hero of the Soviet Union (for bravery in Afghanistan), is close kin to the strangers in *Happy Days* (1992) and the Kafka adaptation *The Castle* (1994). Lengthy journeys through the ever present snow, on foot or by tram, recall *Of Freaks and Men* as well as the work of other fetishistic observers of facial and body language such as Alan Clarke, Béla Tarr or Balabanov's compatriot Andrei Tarkovsky. This is at its most intense as the hitherto inscrutable Skryabin is forced to take the law into his own hands, his face betraying only the minutest flicker of what must be overwhelming emotion as he travels between the scene of the crime and the home of the perpetrators.

Balabanov's films almost invariably feature highly distinctive soundtracks, sometimes performed and/or namechecked on screen. Danila, the protagonist of *Brother*, accidentally interrupts the shooting of a music video by the high-profile Russian rock band Nautilus Pompilius; *Of Freaks and Men* sets several hypnotically wordless boat and tram rides to Mussorgsky; and *Cargo 200* uses popular Soviet-era songs as an implicitly ironic commentary on the film's onscreen horrors. *The Stoker* goes even further, underscoring virtually the entire film (including important dialogue scenes) with a series of jaunty, finger-snappingly catchy folk and flamenco-tinged pop songs and instrumental numbers (many by fusion guitarist DiDuLiA, mentioned during an early conversation between Sasha and Masha) so wildly at odds with the relentlessly dog-eat-dog vengeance driving the narrative that the experience becomes unnervingly intoxicating.

But the most distinctive counterpoint in the film is that between Skryabin's mundane daily



Burn after pleading: Alina Politova, Mikhail Skryabin, Varvara Belokurova

existence and his imaginative inner life, deriving from his ethnic origin as a Yakut (a Turkic people based in north-eastern Siberia). In between boiler-stoking, he spends his time seated at an old manual typewriter, painstakingly pecking out a tale of rape and humiliation inflicted by a Russian exile on a Yakut couple during the Tsarist era, a time when the Yakuts had no legal rights and were powerless to prevent exploitation by Russian ex-convicts forcibly resettled alongside them. Actually, as Sasha points out, he's rewriting 'Khailak', an existing folktale (possibly word for

It will come as little surprise to anyone even vaguely familiar with Balabanov's oeuvre that the body count is substantial

word in the manner of Borges's Pierre Menard) originally published in 1893 by the Polish writer and ethnographer Wacław Sieroszewski, who was himself exiled to the Yakut region for attempting to promote socialist ideas. Skryabin reads from the manuscript at several points, often to Vera, a wide-eyed little girl who pays him regular visits. Although he never personally draws attention to this, it seems likely that Skryabin sees himself and Sasha (who converse in Yakut when alone together) as a latterday equivalent of Khabdzhii and Kermes, the couple in the story, who end up at the bottom of an institutionalised pecking order through no fault of their own.

At the very end of the film, 'Khailak' is dramatised via a setting and *mise en scène* strongly reminiscent of one of Balabanov's least-seen but most striking films, *The River* (2002), which was left deliberately truncated at less than an hour following the mid-production death of its leading actress. Also set in 19th-century Yakutia, adapted from Sieroszewski's work and co-starring the late Mikhail Skryabin (who plays his namesake in *The Stoker*), it's a rare example of a Russian feature that's thoroughly immersed in the world of one of the country's largely ignored (but half-a-million-strong) ethnic minorities.

The Stoker's adaptation of 'Khailak' is also abruptly cut short, this time thanks to Skryabin's unfinished manuscript coming to a tantalisingly ambiguous end: Kermes, recently raped by her Russian guest, is being beaten by her husband Khabdzhii, but the final line suggests that she may actually welcome this, due to latent masochism or a belief that she somehow deserves her fate or very possibly both. The fact that this already decidedly unsettling material is being narrated by Vera – who seemed drawn to both Skryabin and his story because he appeared to have a firm grasp of notions of good and evil in a world where they've rapidly become alarmingly blurred – strikes another disturbingly discordant note at the end of a film that is ultimately much more resonant than the gleefully amoral tone of individual set pieces might initially suggest. 

Credits and Synopsis

Producer

Sergei Selyanov

Screenplay

Alexey Balabanov

Director of Photography

Alexander Simonov

Editor

Tatyana Kuzmicheva

Production Designer

Anastasia Karimulina

Music

Didiulja

Sound

Maxim Belovolov

Costumes

Nadezda Vasileva

Production Companies

©CTB Film Company

Cast

Mikhail Skryabin

Major Ivan Skryabin

Aida Tumutova

production
With the support of
Ministry of Culture
of the Russian
Federation, Fond Kino

Cast

Mikhail Skryabin

Major Ivan Skryabin

Aida Tumutova

Sasha

Alexander Mosin

Sergeant

Yuri Matveev

Bizon

Anna Korotaeva

Masha

Vyacheslav Pauliuts

Fedor Alexeyevich

Vyacheslav Telnov

Andrey Sergeevich

Varvara Belokurova

Vera

Alina Politova

Lena

Petr Semak

Colonel

Roman Burenkov

Gosha

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Filmhouse

7,866 ft +0 frames

Russian theatrical title

Kochegar

North-west Russia, the 1990s. Afghan War veteran Skryabin works as a stoker, topping up the furnaces with coal, wood and fresh corpses, the latter supplied by Misha, a former colleague turned hitman. Skryabin has left his flat to his daughter Sasha, and sleeps beside the furnace. He is writing a story set in his native Yakutia, reading extracts to Misha and to Vera, a little girl who regularly visits him. Misha's daughter Masha is Sasha's business partner, and they're unknowingly sharing the sexual services of Misha's taciturn colleague Vasya ('Bison'). Businessman Andrei Sergeyevich asks a friend, Fyodor Alexeyevich, to arrange his former partner's death. Fyodor Alexeyevich hires Misha and Bison. The job completed, Bison gambles his earnings at blackjack,

and wins. A furious Fyodor Alexeyevich (who intended to rig the game) confronts Misha, and is shot dead and incinerated. Masha discovers Bison's duplicity, blames Sasha and asks Misha to get rid of her. Bison duly kills her, losing one of her shoes. When Sasha's corpse is disposed of, Skryabin recognises her remaining shoe. After finding the other shoe in her apartment, he dons his old military uniform, visits Misha's flat and kills him and Bison in front of Masha. Back in the boiler room, he slits his wrist. Vera finds his corpse and removes the manuscript. It's the story of a Russian, Kostya, who rapes a Yakut woman, Kermes, and humiliates her husband Khabdzhii. As the unfinished manuscript ends, Kermes is asking Khabdzhii to beat her, but not too hard.

Benjamin Britten Peace and Conflict

United Kingdom/Australia/Finland/Norway 2013
Director: Tony Britten, Certificate PG 108m 53s

Reviewed by Adam Howard

It goes without saying that Benjamin Britten is one of our greatest composers, carving a niche between the avant-garde and the accessible that remains both tremendously popular and influential. Made as part of a celebration of his centenary this year, *Benjamin Britten: Peace and Conflict* explores how his music became a vehicle for his staunchly pacifist views, influenced by his explorations of Marxism and communism at boarding school, solidified by his experiences performing at concentration camps in Auschwitz and culminating in his 'War Requiem', one of the most stirring works of the 20th century.

It's all engaging stuff, but sadly director Tony Britten has no idea how to present his material cinematically. Most of the film consists of photographs and letters appearing on screen, accompanied by a voiceover that at its worst resembles a PowerPoint presentation; dramatic reconstructions of the composer's time at boarding school are laughably clumsy and add little, becoming increasingly superfluous once the narrative leaves his schooldays behind.

What we're left with is the music, which is rightfully put front and centre, particularly in the film's final third. We're treated to some beautiful performances, which act as a reminder of the innovation and probing, emotional depth that Britten's music possesses and the film itself lacks. Though it has clearly been made with the best of intentions, *Peace and Conflict* never does more than drily present its subject-matter, turning what could have been a symphony into something of a dirge. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Tony Britten
Producers
Katja Mordaunt
Anwen Rees-Myers
Written by
Tony Britten
Director of Photography
Roger Bonnici
Editor
Ray Gotts
Production Designer
Emma Davis
Sound Recordist
Jonathan Blagrove
Costume Designer
Andrew Joslin

©Capriol Films
Production Companies
Capriol Films in association with SBS-TV Australia, YLE Finland and NRK Norway and support from The Britten-Pears Foundation

presents a Tony Britten production Produced in association SBS-TV Australia, YLE Finland and NRK Norway With support from The Britten-Pears Foundation

Cast
Alex Lawther
Benjamin Britten
Mykola Allen
Oliver Berthoud
Bradley Hall
Peter Lloyd
Jeremy Lloyd
David Layton
Jake Mann
James Klugmann
Christopher Theobald
Donald Maclean
Paul Hands
George Howson
Alastair Boag
Walter Grotalex

Madeleine Brolly
matron
Christopher Scouler
Bishop of Norwich
Callum Chapman
Bernard Floud
Nick Stromberg
Roger Simon
Jack Gillett
Brian Simon

narrator
John Hurt

In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Capriol Films Ltd

9,799 ft +8 frames

A documentary about English composer Benjamin Britten (1913-1976). Beginning with his involvement in Marxist and communist groups at boarding school and tracing his life through to the composition of his masterpiece, 'War Requiem', the film explores Britten's pacifist views and how they shaped his music, using voiceover, photographs and archival footage intercut with dramatic interpretations of key scenes from his childhood and live performances of his work.

Beware of Mr. Baker

USA 2012
Director: Jay Bulger
Certificate 15 92m 25s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

The title sounds like a gag, but just inside the gated entrance to legendary rock drummer Ginger Baker's South African ranch there is indeed a sign that reads "Beware of Mr Baker". And only moments into this feature-doc portrait, the seriously ornery 70-year-old whacks filmmaker Jay Bulger straight in the face with his walking stick, apoplectic over Bulger's plans to interview some of his former colleagues. Given the archive footage we see of Baker's thunderous potency behind the drum kit, the flow of blood from the director's nose is no surprise – and, of course, it makes a startling opening flourish for a film that understands Baker's musical significance and captures the full spectrum of his larger-than-life personality.

Bulger's researchers have certainly come up with swathes of choice older material, showing the driving force of 60s heavy-rock trio Cream in various live situations, head down, hands and feet moving in polyrhythmic independence, like some scary ginger dervish, his golf-ball gaze betraying a history of chemical indulgence. The images hint at a restless, furiously aggressive soul, but what's fascinating elsewhere is how the personality seems exactly imprinted on the music, as a succession of bands burn brightly then flame out (he once pulled a knife on bass legend Jack Bruce for daring to play along with a drum solo), and relationships too take the same path, if bitter testimony from his children and ex-wives is anything to go by.

Various worthies of the rock drum kit, including Stewart Copeland of The Police and Red Hot Chili Peppers' Chad Smith, attest clearly how Baker revolutionised rock drumming by bringing in the multilayered approach of jazz great Max Roach to what had previously been a straight time-keeping role, but it's former Cream bandmate Eric Clapton who contributes the most telling assessment of the man. Just after we've heard Baker – alternately crotchety and forthcoming in the interview that forms the bulk of the movie – describing Clapton as his best friend in the whole world, the latter muses, with seemingly unguarded honesty, that he's only ever seen a part of Baker and is unsure he really knows him at all. It's a smart piece of editing, confirming the film's earlier impression that Baker has been irrevocably shaped by losing his father in early childhood, and somehow thence doomed by his own self-destructive volatility to break every connection, leave every place that's threatened to tie him down.

Evidently a useful career primer – even if it does underplay Baker's strong run of high-profile jazz albums in the 1990s to sustain a notion of its subject as a peripatetic outsider – the film has more to give beyond its music-doc remit, constructing a haunting portrait of a genuinely tragic figure. Baker is cussed and not altogether likeable, his musical generosity and compassion for animals seeming to turn toxic when it comes to other people. The one to suffer, as this astute piece of filmmaking reminds us, is ultimately Baker himself, since the cheers of the crowds greeting him as he heads out on tour in his seventies have an empty ring for viewers who now know the personal wreckage and isolation awaiting him off-stage. **S**



Sour cream dressing: Ginger Baker

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Andrew Karsch
Fisher Stevens
Erik H. Gordon
Jay Bulger
Written by
Jay Bulger
Director of Photography
Eric Robbins
Edited by
Abhay Sofsky
Music Supervisor
Susan Jacobs
Audio Mixer
Dan Gleich

Gerd Jochum
@[no company given]
Production Companies
Insurgent Media presents a Puglist At Rest production Supported by IFFP Produced by Insurgent Media LLC Produced in association with Puglist At Rest Executive

Producers
Julie Goldman
Tony Palmer

In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Artificial Eye Film Company

8,317 ft +8 frames

Tulbagh, South Africa, 2009. Seventy-year-old rock drummer Ginger Baker smashes filmmaker Jay Bulger in the face with his walking stick. In earlier footage, Baker reminisces about his career and personal life: a working-class Londoner who lost his father at the age of four during WWII, he discovered a love of jazz and a gift for percussion during his teens, before formidable British jazz drummer Phil Seamen tutored him in polyrhythms and warned him off heroin. Baker was soon using the drug, however, and carving a path through the 1960s British music scene, finding major commercial success with bassist Jack Bruce and guitarist Eric Clapton in the rock power-trio Cream. Interviews with his Cream cohorts, rock-star admirers and family members build a picture of a musical powerhouse and an abrasive, often violent individual who, after his brush with rock stardom, relocated to Nigeria in the 1970s, working with Afro-beat star Fela Kuti and discovering a love of polo. However, following financial problems he relocated to the US, where his 80s jazz outfit won the approval of his musical idol Max Roach, before immigration issues prompted Baker's deportation.

As the story comes full circle to South Africa, Baker is estranged from earlier wives and children, on his fourth marriage and suffering from arthritis. Filmmaker Bulger reads the walking-stick attack as a sign of Baker's undimmed spirit. Eighteen months later, Baker is performing to adoring crowds in Europe.

The Big Wedding

USA 2012
Director: Justin Zackham
Certificate 15 89m 18s



Let's pretend: Robert De Niro, Diane Keaton

Reviewed by Bethany Rutter

The Big Wedding is, in a very literal sense, confusing. Even though it was apparently written by only one person (director Justin Zackham), the screenplay feels so slapdash and thrown-together that it could only have been penned by a group of people figuring out 'how to be funny'. It often takes a few seconds for a line to register as a joke because not only is it categorically not funny, it also makes no sense. Sometimes lines that are set up as jokes garner no laughs at all.

On a plot level, it's hard to get behind the motivations of the characters: for the wedding of their adopted son Alejandro, long-divorced couple Ellie (Diane Keaton) and Don (Robert

De Niro) fake being still married to each other in order to keep Alejandro's biological mother happy when she visits from Colombia. To believe in their frankly ludicrous behaviour one would have to feel that the stakes were sufficiently high, but they aren't. Obviously we're meant to accept that Alejandro telling his devoutly Catholic mother that his adoptive parents are divorced is out of the question because that would mean her son has been raised by heathens.

Accompanying Seriously Catholic Mother is Seriously Sexy Sister, who, from the moment she appears on screen, one (correctly) assumes is there to seduce Alejandro's 29-year-old virgin brother Jared. As well as being stunning, she is also intelligent, confident and bilingual – which begs the question of why Alejandro had to be adopted out of Colombia in the first place. Just one of many questions.

The editing seriously impedes the coherent flow of the action: in one scene, the family arrive at a big party in someone's extravagant home; they walk through a door and they are now in a restaurant. On other occasions, we are expected to understand and take for granted events we've had no prior warning about. Don and Ellie have been divorced for 15 years, seem to share little affection and certainly no chemistry – but when they're forced to share a bed for a night they have sex, with zero preceding flirtation or tension. It's revealed late on in the film that Ellie once had an affair with the bride's father, even though he's repeatedly portrayed as a dull member of the nouveau riche and a complete bigot. Another late-in-the-day revelation is that the bride's mother is bisexual, a disclosure which suddenly turns her into a predatory Sapphic sleaze. It's as if the writers were keen to pile on as much 'stuff' as possible to astound the audience. None of it, however, passes as plot twists or big reveals and is often executed uncomfortably.

The ensemble cast of actors who have, at points, been A-grade performers, manage to show all their very obvious weaknesses. Diane Keaton plays the same Diane Keaton she's been playing forever; Robert De Niro does his 'loveable rogue' yet again; and Robin Williams is almost painful in his efforts to amuse as a Catholic priest.

Within minutes it's easy to see that *The Big Wedding* is just another romantic comedy lacking both romance and comedy, and it does nothing to redeem itself. ☹

Byzantium

Ireland/United Kingdom/USA 2012
Director: Neil Jordan
Certificate 15 118m 26s

See feature
on page 28

Reviewed by Kate Stables

In 1994, Neil Jordan's lavish, febrile and unabashedly camp adaptation of *Interview with the Vampire* was an early entrant in what has come to feel like an endless postmodern pageant of the undead. Now that the *Underworld* and *Twilight* film series and TV's sex-and-exsanguination fest *True Blood*, among others, have all but sucked the subject dry, can Jordan find any fresh meat on this tale of mother-and-daughter vampire fugitives, dogged by their past crimes?

Digging for the humanity rather than the supernatural in their predicament for starters, he's brought out a thoughtful, melancholy streak in Moira Buffini's 'young adult' drama (adapted from her National Theatre play *A Vampire Story*) which quietly subverts the genre's current tedious tropes of interspecies love affairs and coven battles. In *Byzantium*, teenage heroine Eleanor's compulsion is to tell, not to kill. Her urge to unburden herself of the truth about the 200-year chase that resulted from her mother Clara stealing their immortal status from the brotherhood of 'The Pointed Nails of Justice' winds the theme of storytelling (a Jordan favourite since *The Company of Wolves*) thickly through the movie. As Eleanor endlessly writes then destroys her pages, her sombre, pained narration creates two story strands: the gritty, wistful tale of the seaside reckoning of her truth-telling and Clara's deceit, and the full-on gothic, windswept melodrama of their birth as vampires.

Unfortunately what starts as an intriguing, time-melding narrative quickly becomes meandering and convoluted, weighed down by its galloping Georgian melodrama of a woman wronged, plentifully larded with portentous voiceover. No wonder Eleanor's appalled teacher says of her memoir, written for a class assessment: "It's as if Edgar Allan Poe and Mary Shelley had got together and had a little kid." Packing in the degradations that 19th-century womanhood was prey to, everything from abduction and prostitution to TB and illegitimate births, screenwriter Buffini takes palpable pleasure in having the brazen Clara violently reverse gender politics. However, Jordan's camera, silkily caressing Gemma Arterton's lingered body as Clara seduces and slaughters a succession of men, throws some fetish in with the feminism, inscribing her as a very femme fatale.

It's eventually too rich a mix, and far too sweeping in scope, to gel comfortably with the plaintive realism of Eleanor's tentative 21st-century romance with local leukaemia sufferer Frank. Their halting mutual fascination holds more hints of *Let the Right One In* than *Twilight* adolescent angst, but Buffini's unexpectedly heavyhanded dialogue (odd, somehow, after the cleverly sensuous conversations of her 2011 *Jane Eyre* screenplay) struggles to convey their bond. She and Jordan continually divide Eleanor and Clara between the life of the mind and body respectively. Saoirse Ronan's moody stare and ethereal sulking convey Eleanor's preoccupations with her cursed past and her painstakingly ethical eating habits (she only 'releases' the dying elderly with their consent). Clara, conversely, is brash and unrepentantly violent, a creature of strong bodily appetites whose crunching

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Clay Pecorin
Harry J. Uffland
Justin Zackham
Richard Salvatore
Anthony Katagas

Screenplay

Justin Zackham
Based on the motion picture *Mon frère se marie* [My Brother Is Getting Married] (2006) directed by Jean-Stéphane Bron

and based on an original screenplay written by Jean-Stéphane Bron and Karine Sudan

Director of

Photography
Jonathan Brown

Editor

Jonathan Corn

Production

Designer

Andrew Jackness

Music

Nathan Barr

Sound Mixer

Ken Ishii

Costume Designer

Aude Bronson-

Howard

@Wedding
Productions, Inc.

Production

Companies

Lionsgate presents a Two Ton Films production
Millennium Films presents a film by Justin Zackham

Executive

Producers

Thierry Spicher
Philippe Martin
Michael Paseornek
Jason Constantine
Eda Kowan
Avi Lerner
Danny Dimbort
Trevor Short
Boaz Davidson
John Thompson

Cast

Robert De Niro
Don Griffin
Katherine Heigl
Lyla
Diane Keaton
Ellie Griffin

Amanda Seyfried

Missy
Tophér Grace
Jared
Susan Sarandon
Bebe

Robin Williams

Father Moinighan

Ben Barnes

Alejandro

Christine Ebersole

Muffin

David Rasche

Barry

Patricia Rae

Madonna

Ana Ayora

Nuria

Dolby Digital/

Datasat

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Lionsgate UK

8,037 ft +0 frames

US, the present. Long-divorced couple Don and Ellie pretend to be still married when their adopted son Alejandro's Colombian biological mother, a devout Catholic, visits them for his wedding. This causes Don's current partner Bebe to leave him. Don and Ellie's daughter Lyla has recently left her husband over rows about their inability to conceive. Alejandro's adoptive brother Jared has been saving his virginity for a woman he loves, but finds himself tempted by Alejandro's biological sister.



Bloodline: Gemma Arterton, Saoirse Ronan

killings resemble sexual encounters. Arterton gifts her with not only an alluringly brassy brothel-keeper's charm, but a magnificent, heartfelt fierceness in defence of her child, garrotting and throat-slitting with relish. *Byzantium's* real passion is inside this ferocious mother-daughter love story, not the teen romance you're anticipating. As Clara grimly offers herself up for execution to save her child, and Eleanor shrilly attempts to leave the purgatory of being yoked teen-and-tart forever, the relationship seems to crowd everything else off the screen.

With the two female leads dominating the emotional space, the surrounding male performances seem mostly pallid (Caleb Landry Jones's Frank literally so, with the waxy pallor of the dying Chatterton) or decorous (Sam Riley's honourable vampire Darvell) by comparison. Nothing over-tasteful spills into the film's visual scheme, however, which Jordan puts together

with DP Sean Bobbitt as an artful marvel of composition slashed with crimson details, seaside sleaze and fairground neon alternating with the vampires' rocky symbolist-inspired island, where the waterfalls run thick with blood and birds form a black noose above a crypt "where time ends".

Mirroring the way in which Eleanor's past experiences feed into her everyday life as passing spectres, *Byzantium* can't help but set off echoes of Jordan's previous films (everything from the gothic girl-power of *The Company of Wolves* and the supernatural sweetness of *Ondine* to the undead child-woman raging at her fate in *Interview with the Vampire*). But top-heavy with cumbersome plot and littered with thematic baggage, it doesn't possess the beautiful simplicity and originality of his best work, or exhibit the startling innovation it would need to do more than cut a dash in a waning genre. However dark, lovely and cunning the costume, it's simply too late to the party. **B**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Stephen Woolley
Alan Moloney
Elizabeth Karlsen
William D. Johnson
Sam Englehardt
Screenplay
Moira Buffini
Based on her play
A Vampire Story
Director of Photography
Sean Bobbitt
Film Editor
Tony Lawson
Production Designer
Simon Elliott
Music
Javier Navarrete

Sound Recordist
Brendan Deasy
Costume Designer
Consolata Boyle

@Parallel Films
(Byzantium) Limited/
Number 9 Films
(Byzantium) Limited
Production Companies
Demarest Films
presents a Stephen
Woolley, Alan
Moloney, Elizabeth
Karlsen production
A Number 9 Films,
Parallel Films,
Demarest Films

production
In association with
Bord Scannán na
hÉireann/Irish Film
Board, LipSync
Productions and
Compton Investments
A Neil Jordan film
Produced with the
support of investment
incentives provided
by the Government
of Ireland
Developed with the
assistance of Bord
Scannán na hÉireann/
Irish Film Board
Made with the
support of BFI's

Film Fund
With the support
of the MEDIA
Programme of the
European Union
Executive Producers
Mark C. Manuel
Ted O'Neal
Sharon Harel-Cohen
Danny Perkins
Norman Merry
Film Extracts
*Dracula Prince of
Darkness* (1965)

Cast
Gemma Arterton
Clara

Saoirse Ronan
Eleanor
Sam Riley
Darvell
Jonny Lee Miller
Ruthven
Daniel Mays
Noel
Caleb Landry Jones
Frank
Kate Ashfield
Gabi
Maria Doyle
Kennedy
Morag
Uri Gavriel
Savella
Thure Lindhardt
Werner

Christine Marzano
Mrs Strange
Barry Cassin
Robert Fowlds

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Studiocanal Limited

10,659 fnt +0 frames

UK, present day. Vampire Clara and her 16-year-old daughter Eleanor arrive at a seaside resort after Clara kills a man who was hunting them. Clara seduces bereaved loser Noel, turning his bankrupt hotel into a brothel. Eleanor, who performs only mercy killings on the dying elderly, meets teenage leukaemia sufferer Frank and enrolls at school with him. For a class assignment, she writes the story of her two centuries with her mother. The story is woven into the main narrative in periodic flashbacks.

Clara was trapped into prostitution by evil Captain Ruthven in 1804, bore Eleanor and paid her orphanage fees by whoring. Dying of TB, she steals a map from Ruthven and his vampire friend

Darvell and finds the island where vampires are created, undergoing the ceremony. When Ruthven threatens Eleanor, Clara kills him and makes Eleanor a vampire. Women vampires are forbidden, so the male coven has chased them ever since.

Frank reads the story, as does Eleanor's horrified teacher. Clara kills the teacher to silence him. Eleanor announces that she is leaving Clara with Frank. Darvell and his coven partner catch Eleanor; Clara, on the brink of killing Frank, allows herself to be captured by them, to save Eleanor. Darvell kills his colleague, confessing his admiration for Clara. She consents to keep him company. Eleanor takes Frank to the island, where he undergoes the vampire ceremony.

Come as You Are

Belgium/The Netherlands 2011

Director: Geoffrey Enthoven

Certificate 15 113m 44s

Reviewed by Jane Lamacraft

Anyone expecting a Nirvana documentary will be disappointed: this *Come As You Are* has nothing to do with Kurt Cobain's 1992 song of the same name. Rather we should perhaps take the title here to be an oo-er-missus pun on the part of the English-language distributors, since the subject of Belgian director Geoffrey Enthoven's comedy-drama is sex, the lack of it and the getting of it: three young men – one blind, one completely paralysed and one suffering a decorous but terminal disease – set off on a trip to a Spanish brothel in search of sex and independence, but mostly sex.

The film treads fairly familiar 'joy in the face of disability/illness' terrain already explored in the likes of *Inside I'm Dancing*, *Third Star* and *The Intouchables* among others, and it's probably not giving too much away to say that once you know the back-of-the-envelope pitch you can pretty much guess how the rest of the story is going to pan out. But although Pierre de Clerq's *Inbetweeners*-meets-*The Sessions* screenplay springs no narrative surprises, it's more original in its depiction of its three lead protagonists, Philip, Lars and Jozef, who bicker and behave badly and are sometimes appalling sexist boors. They drink (fine wines, mind you), they swear, they sulk, they leer. Whenever a nubile young woman is anywhere in sight, the camera shows her from the men's point of view – breasts, thighs, bum – and this has nothing to do with their wheelchair-level perspective. Philip (Robrecht Vanden Thoren) is the angriest, most abrasive, most peevish of the three, and his initial treatment of Claude, the overweight, no-nonsense nurse/minibus-driver who accompanies them on their trip (a lovely performance from Isabelle de Hertogh in baggy cardy and woolly hat), is especially obnoxious – though it won't surprise you to learn that, as convention dictates, they're the best of old muckers by the end. Blind Jozef (Tom Audenaert), an overgrown mummy's boy and wearer of bad knitwear, is the sweetest of the three. The leads (Gilles de Schryver completes the trio as Lars) keep things likeable, and except for its last five minutes the film avoids conventional melodramatics in favour of gentle road-trip humour, an approach that has won it audience awards at several international festivals;



De Schryver, Audenaert, Vanden Thoren

The Company You Keep

USA/Luxembourg/Canada 2012

Director: Robert Redford

Certificate 15 121m 37s

there's talk, too, of an American remake.

The film was inspired by *For One Night Only*, a 2007 BBC documentary about Asta Philpot, a young man born with a condition called arthrogryposis, who did indeed lose his virginity in a specialist Spanish brothel (he makes a cameo appearance here) and who found it such a life-changing experience that he has since campaigned for the rights of people with disabilities to have access to the human intimacy they need. "Why," he asks on his website, "should I be afraid of what I want to do?" Quite right. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Mariano Vanhoof
Screenplay
Pierre de Clercq
From an original story by Mariano Vanhoof
Based on the experiences of Asta Philpot and his friends
Director of Photography
Gerd Schellhout
Editing
Philippe Ravoet
Art Director
Kurt Rigolle
Music
Meuris
Papermouth
Production Sound Mixer
Geert Vlegels
Costumes
Joëlle Meerbergen

©Fobic Films
Production Companies
Fobic Films present a Mariano Vanhoof production in co-production with K2, één
In association

with Emedialab
Supported by Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds, Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel de la Communauté Française de Belgique et des Télédiffuseurs Wallons, MEDIA programme of the European Union
Produced with the support of Tax Shelter of the Federal Belgian Government, Groep Anthonissen Boekhoudkantoren, Rolstoelen Vermeiren N.V., Dutch Filmworks, Kinopolis Group, Mollywood, Intris, Prime

Cast
Robrecht Vanden Thoren
Philip
Gilles De Schryver
Lars
Tom Audenaert
Jozef
Isabelle De Hertogh
Claude

Karel Vingerhoets
Philip's father
Katelijne Verbeke
Philip's mother

Dolby In Colour [2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Eureka Entertainment Ltd

10,236 ft +0 frames

Belgian theatrical title
Hasta la vista

Belgium, present day. Philip, Jozef and Lars are friends who like to attend wine-tasting events. Philip is quadriplegic, Jozef blind and Lars in a wheelchair due to terminal illness. Anxious to lose their virginity, the trio decide to travel to El Cielo, a Spanish brothel tailored to the needs of people with disabilities. They persuade their worried parents to let them go on what they claim will be a sightseeing/wine-tasting trip; a driver/carer, Leo, is hired to take them. However, when Lars's doctors pronounce him too ill to travel, the trip is cancelled. The three young men decide to sneak away from their parents and go on the trip anyway. Leo recommends a new driver, Claude. The three friends are shocked when Claude turns out to be a brusque, overweight Frenchwoman; Philip in particular treats her rudely. Their angry parents catch up with them en route, but are persuaded to allow them to continue their holiday. Claude reveals that she is on parole, having spent a year in prison following an attack on her unfaithful husband.

As the trip progresses, Claude and her passengers warm to each other. They camp in the countryside. Finally they arrive at a villa their parents have rented for them in Spain. Philip and Lars argue after the latter goes on a date with a Spanish girl. When the friends go to El Cielo, Lars is taken ill and they all leave, deciding to return the following evening. The next night, however, Jozef decides not to go; instead he remains in the villa and tells Claude that he loves her; they make love in her van. Following Philip and Lars's successful visit to El Cielo, the four camp on the beach. Next morning Lars is dead.

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

Robert Redford's latest outing as director/producer/star covers similar ground to Sidney Lumet's *Running on Empty* (1988) – how long can you remain faithful to your youthful political ideals? Could you face hiding and running for the rest of your life? Is violence against an oppressive government ever justified? But it never builds the same narrative tension, nor reaches the same emotional depth. Redford, still looking good at 76, is respected lawyer Nick Sloan, who's been living under an assumed name for 30 years until his radical past comes to light and he's forced to go on the run. An impressive roll-call of Hollywood's left-leaning elite – Susan Sarandon, Julie Christie, Nick Nolte, Richard Jenkins, Sam Elliott, Chris Cooper, Stanley Tucci et al – show up along the way. Idealistic speeches are made: "It wasn't a dream. It was a possibility that could have become a reality." Yet a man-on-the-run story should generate some sense of danger. This is intelligent, conscientious filmmaking with its heart in the right place – but it plods.

Part of the trouble is that roster of the famous. As each familiar face shows up, the action has to slow to allow him or her a due moment of glory. Still, they serve their purpose; Redford and his screenwriter Lem Dobbs (*Kafka*, *The Limey*, *Haywire*) use each one to show how the various ex-activists have come to terms with their past, from Jenkins's college prof, teaching Marx and Frantz Fanon but terrified that his background may be exposed ("Now we're just a story told to children"), to Christie as Nick's ex-lover Mimi Lurie, still holding firm to the faith ("Everything we said then is true today"). Some of the younger cast feel wasted: Anna Kendrick, so good opposite George Clooney in Jason Reitman's *Up in the Air* (2009), is here given almost nothing to work with.

She plays junior FBI agent Diana, once briefly the girlfriend of Shia LaBeouf's investigative



Stormy weather: Robert Redford

reporter Ben Shepard, whose relentless digging causes Nick to cut and run. LaBeouf makes valiant efforts to surmount his inherent blandness but he's still acted off the screen by most of the heavyweights. Especially so in his jail-cell encounter with Sarandon as Sharon Solarz, the former Weather Underground member whose arrest sparks off the plot, when she tells him: "Kids our age were being murdered by our government. We made mistakes – but we were right." It's the film's most deeply felt scene, thanks to the passion in Sarandon's voice and eyes, and it comes early on in the action. From there on the temperature drops, though occasional scenes catch light – in the encounters between Ben and Rebecca (Brit Marling), the fiercely intelligent daughter of Brendan Gleeson's retired police chief; and in the final confrontation between Nick and Mimi, one-time lovers and activist comrades, when she tells him: "The struggle doesn't end just because you got tired of it." But after this, Mimi's change of heart feels at once predictable and unmotivated, a feelgood happy ending far too easily bought. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Nicolas Chartier
Robert Redford
Bill Holderman
Screenplay
Lem Dobbs
Based on the novel by Neil Gordon
Director of Photography
Adriano Goldman
Editor
Mark Day
Production Designer
Laurence Bennett
Music
Cliff Martinez
Production Sound Mixer
Chris Dueterdiek
Costume Designer
Karen Matthews

©TCYQ, LLC
Production Companies
Voltage Pictures presents a Voltage Pictures/Wildwood Enterprises production
A film by Robert Redford
In association with Film Capital Europe

Funds S.A., Soundford Limited and Picture Perfect Corporation
With the participation of British Columbia Film Incentive BC
Executive Producers
Craig J. Flores
Shawn Williamson

Cast
Robert Redford
Jim Grant
Shia LaBeouf
Ben Shepard
Julie Christie
Mimi Lurie
Sam Elliott
Mac Mcleod
Brendan Gleeson
Henry Osborne
Terrence Howard
FBI Agent Cornelius
Richard Jenkins
Jed Lewis
Anna Kendrick
Diana
Brit Marling
Rebecca Osborne
Stanley Tucci
Ray Fuller
Nick Nolte
Donal Fitzgerald

Chris Cooper
Daniel Sloan
Susan Sarandon
Sharon Solarz

Dolby Digital/ Datasat In Colour [2.35:1]

Distributor
Studiocanal Limited

10,945 ft +8 frames

Present-day Vermont. Sharon Solarz, housewife and one-time member of the radical anti-war movement the Weather Underground, sets out to give herself up. She's intercepted at the New York State border by an FBI team and taken to Albany to stand trial for her involvement 30 years ago in a Michigan bank-raid in which a guard was shot dead. She asks Jim Grant, an Albany lawyer, to defend her but he declines. Ben Shepard, a reporter on the 'Albany Sun-Times', is berated by his editor for having missed the Solarz story. Hoping to recoup, he goes to interview Jim and, intrigued by his caginess, investigates further, discovering that Jim is really Nick Sloan, another former member of the Weathermen.

Realising he's about to be exposed, Nick flees to New York with his 11-year-old daughter Isabel, leaving her with his brother Daniel before setting out to find Mimi Lurie, his one-time lover and fellow activist, and the only person who can clear him of involvement in the Michigan killing. In his search he reconnects with various former activist friends and also with Henry Osborne, an ex-police chief who, because of his family's friendship with Mimi's family, adopted Mimi and Nick's daughter Rebecca. Nick tracks Mimi to a cabin on Drummond Island in Lake Huron, near the Canadian border. Still firm in her radical beliefs, she refuses to help him and, as Ben and the FBI close in, sets sail for Canada. Nick is arrested, but at the last moment Mimi has a change of heart. Nick is freed and reunited with Isabel.

Deadfall

USA/France 2011
Director: Stefan Ruzowitzky
Certificate 15 94m 51s

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

Stefan Ruzowitzky's *Deadfall* begins immediately post-heist. Brother Addison (Eric Bana) asks sister Liza (Olivia Wilde) how she feels about her first caper. "Elated," she says. "Nervous. Like I'm doing something dirty." It's a nonsense reply, establishing her profligately uncontrolled (and hence untrustworthy) sexuality, apparently misdirected towards her brother ("I'm your little girl"). A fatal confrontation with a trooper forces the pair to evade the law by temporarily fleeing into two different movies that eventually converge.

Liza's narrative is a soggy romance, beginning when she's picked up off the freezing roads by Jay (Charlie Hunnam), a former Olympic boxer fresh out of prison. She vamps and seduces her way into his protective custody, maturing into normative, non-incestuous sexual urges while falling in unexpected dewy love in a setting that seems cobbled from vaguely remembered movie versions of a generic Deep South transposed to northern Michigan. Jay's parents Chet (Kris Kristofferson, glaring balefully throughout) and June (Sissy Spacek) live in a charmingly oversized old house in the middle of nowhere, armed for deer hunting and homestead protection, ready for whiteout snow conditions with their bountiful pantry and conspicuous heartland decency.

Homicidal Addison makes his way through stranger, darker forests — fighting knife-wielding Indians, getting into unnecessary snowmobile chases with cops and temporarily serving as an odd paternal protector. When he sees an abusive father shouting at a mother and daughter fleeing into the blizzarding forest, he

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Gary Levinsohn
Shelly Clippard
Ben Cosgrove
Todd Wagner
Written by
Zach Dean
Director of Photography
Shane Hurlbut
Film Editors
Arthur Tarnowski
Dan Zimmerman
Production Designer
Paul Denham
Austerberry
Music
Marco Beltrami
Buck Sanders
Sound Mixer
Louis Marion
Costume Designer
Odette Gadoury
Stunt Co-ordinator
Jean Frenette

©Kin (U.S.)
Productions LLC
Production Companies
Studiocanal and
2929 Productions
present a Mutual
Film Company
production
A Stefan
Ruzowitzky film
Executive Producers
Mark Cuban
Josette Perrotta
Adam Kolbrenner
Winfried
Hammacher
Olivier Courson
Ron Halpern

Cast
Eric Bana
Addison

Olivia Wilde
Liza
Charlie Hunnam
Jay Mills
Kate Mara
Hanna Becker
Treat Williams
Sheriff Marshall
T. Becker
Kris Kristofferson
Chet Mills
Sissy Spacek
June Mills

Dolby Digital
Colour by
Technicolor
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Warner Bros
Distributors (UK)

8,536 ft +8 frames

Northern Michigan, the present. Siblings Addison and Liza are fleeing from a successful robbery when their car flips over. Addison kills a police officer who tries to help. The siblings separate, agreeing to meet later and cross the border into Canada. Liza is picked up by Jay, a former Olympic athlete just released from prison, and the two fall in love. Addison finds his way to the home of Jay's parents Chet and June. Local police officer Hanna arrives during Thanksgiving dinner, after Addison has taken Chet, June and Jay hostage. In the ensuing confrontation, Liza tells Addison that she loves Jay, and kills her brother when he turns violent.



Family trees: Eric Bana

kills the man. Restoring the women to the cabin, he tells the young girl to "cuddle up real tight while I have a think for a minute". This type of generically stylised speech is delivered by Bana in a ghostly (Southern?) drawl throughout. Blunter metaphoric exchanges have him telling the girl, "Maybe that's how you should think of me — like an angel come down from the storm." (The girl later, disillusioned: "You're no angel!")

Addison's film is a riff on *The Night of the Hunter*, in which he is the uneasily charming bad man making his way through a vaguely gothic landscape. (The production was actually shot in Canada, and there are distractingly hazy gusts of CGI snow throughout.) Jay and Liza's film is about falling in love when forced to stop at a bar for the night in generic, forgettable style. "This is kind of like an old movie, don't you think?" Liza chirps at Jay. "Two people meeting in a snow storm." Presumably something like 1934's *It Happened One Night* is meant — a classic love-when-thrown-together narrative — but *Deadfall*'s allusions are as hapless as its banter.

A third strand concerns local police officer Hanna (Kate Mara), treated with such relentlessly dismissive sexism by the force led by her dad that it's like a remake of *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991). Hanna is on friendly terms with Chet and June, and their homebody camaraderie on the rural frontiers of organised civilisation (alternated with laborious attempts at black comedy) vaguely invoke 1996's *Fargo*. The clashing tonal shifts are consistently strange while remaining very dull. This is Zach Dean's first filmed screenplay, and much of its connective tissue seems to belong to a long-forgotten TV series or direct-to-video production: "This is the real deal, boys," a police officer exhorts his troops before a manhunt.

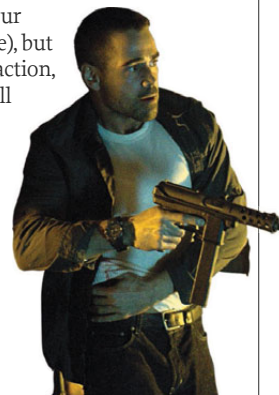
The film slouches into a final act in which a group of people — here, a family unit — are held at the mercy of a loquacious psychotic who is sinisterly tyrannical about dinner etiquette, biding his time until the moment for violence comes. (The Thanksgiving holiday can be stressful for American families thrown together for often strained gatherings, but the film doesn't seem to have satirical intent.) With *Killer Joe*'s admirably tense recent rendition in mind, it's hard to take Bana's scenery chewing as anything more than an overly mannered approach to a familiar situation. Dean's dialogue throughout is so flat (Liza on herself: "I wish I was somebody else") that the film's a wash-out from the start. ☹

Dead Man Down

USA 2013
Director: Niels Arden Oplev
Certificate 15 117m 32s

Reviewed by Samuel Wigley

Fans of Niels Arden Oplev's original *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2009) can breathe easy: the director has survived the transition to Hollywood with his predilection for overwrought plotting and seamy melodrama intact. The anaemically titled *Dead Man Down* is a harebrained piece of flimflam about Victor (Colin Farrell), a Hungarian immigrant living in New York who's inveigled himself into the inner circle of nasty mobster Alphonse Hoyt (Terrence Howard) in order to exact a needlessly convoluted piece of violent retribution on the man who killed his family. Victor is admired from across the way by his neighbour Beatrice (Noomi Rapace), but she too demands satisfaction, blackmailing him to kill the drunk driver who has left her with what the script assures us is facial disfigurement but all visual evidence suggests is mild scarring or even some misapplied mascara. ☹



Colin Farrell

Credits and Synopsis

Producer
Neal Moritz
J.H.Wyman
Written by
J.H.Wyman
Director of Photography
Paul Cameron
Edited by
Frederic Thorval
Timothy A. Good
Production Designer
Niels Sejer
Music
Jacob Groth
Sound Mixer
Tom Nelson
Costume Designer
Renee Ehrlich Kalfus
Stunt Co-ordinator
Brian Smyj

@[no company given]
Production

Companies
Filmdistrict, IM
Global and WWE
Studios present in association with Automatik an Original Film and Frequency Films production
Executive Producers
Ori Marmur
Reid Shane
Stuart Ford
Michael J. Luisi
Brian Kavanaugh-Jones
Deepak Nayar
Peter Schlessel

Cast
Colin Farrell
Victor
Noomi Rapace
Beatrice

Dominic Cooper
Darcy
Terrence Howard
Alphonse Hoyt
Isabelle Huppert
Valentine Lauzon
Luis Da Silva
Terry
Wade Barrett
Kilroy
Franky G
Lucco
James Biberi
Ilir

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Momentum Pictures

10,578 ft +0 frames

New York, the present. Hungarian immigrant Victor has infiltrated the gang of mobster Alphonse Hoyt, who killed his family. He dates his neighbour Beatrice, who blackmails him to murder the drunk driver who left her disfigured. Alphonse receives a series of threatening packages; his henchman Darcy investigates and believes that someone called Laszlo Kerik (Victor's real name) is the sender.

Victor kidnaps the brother of Albanian gangster Ilir, planning to use a videotape of him to set Ilir and Alphonse against each other. Alphonse warns Victor of the fate awaiting the traitor within his inner circle. Victor doesn't go through with killing the drunk driver, fearing the effect it would have on Beatrice, with whom he's falling in love. Likewise, Beatrice doesn't mail the tape that Victor has asked her to deliver, fearing for his safety. Darcy finds out that Victor is the culprit. Victor rescues Beatrice from the house where Alphonse is holding her captive. After watching the videotape, Ilir and Alphonse turn their guns on each other's men. Beatrice and Victor escape unharmed.

Easy Money

Sweden/Denmark/Germany/Norway/France 2010
Director: Daniël Espinosa
Certificate 15 124m 50s

Reviewed by Ashley Clark

Released to critical acclaim and strong box office in its home country of Sweden in 2010 (under the much more appealing title *Snabba Cash*), Daniël Espinosa's muscular third feature arrives in UK cinemas in the curious position of having already spawned a less remarkable sequel by a different director (*Easy Money 2*), acted as a calling card for Espinosa's disappointing Hollywood debut *Safe House* (2012) and been snagged by Warner Bros for a US remake set to star Zac Efron.

On release in the US the film was 'presented' by Martin Scorsese, and it's easy to see what prompted him to adopt ambassadorial duties. Like a grimmer version of his 2006 Oscar-winner *The Departed*, *Easy Money* – based on a bestselling novel by Swedish criminal defence lawyer Jens Lapidus – comprehensively rejects Manichean dynamics in favour of a knotty network of antiheroes and unpredictable, dense plotting. Though *Easy Money* might be lumped in with the recent proliferation of slick Nordic thrillers such as *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2009) and its sequels, *Headhunters* (2011) and *False Trail* (2011), it actually has more in common with the bleakly empathetic non-US work of Alejandro González Iñárritu, in particular the urgent narrative dexterity of *Amores Perros* (2000) and the grimy urban decay and stark economic imperatives of *Biutiful* (2010).

Subverting traditional notions of Stockholm as a sunny, placid destination, Espinosa serves up a bleak, blue-hued vision of a city ravaged by the economic crisis, a sweaty underbelly of bruised masculinity and shady characters making split-second, life-or-death decisions. No one among the film's multiracial, multifaceted cast looks as if they've had a decent night's sleep in a year.

The most consistently exhausted figure is JW, excellently played by the wiry Joel Kinnaman. Ambitious and good-looking, JW maintains a



Prey as you go: Dragomir Mrcic

lifestyle among Sweden's *stekare* (the jet set) and spots opportunity in the imminent collapse of the banking system. But his outward largesse hides a secret life; he lives in a tiny one-bedroom apartment in a student housing complex, drives an illegal taxi to make ends meet, and masks a fierce shame about his lower-class background. He strikes up an uneasy friendship with recent prison escapee Jorge (Matias Padin Varela) and it's not long before their paths intertwine with Mrado, a taciturn henchman for a fearsome Serbian drug gang. All are afforded a generous level of backstory (Jorge has a pregnant sister, Mrado a young daughter), and while the idea that 'bad guys are people too' is not a particularly new one, their rounded characterisations help to make the film a more engaging experience while further clouding the moral landscape.

Espinosa handles the intricate plot with skill, and conjures a brusquely stylish aesthetic, all grainy visuals and mobile, intrusive camerawork. The handful of violent action sequences are genuinely immersive, but the film is best enjoyed as a near-Dickensian study of greed, desperation and thwarted urban flight. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producer
Fredrik Wikström
Screenplay
Maria Karlsson
In collaboration with Daniël Espinosa
Fredrik Wikström
Hassan Loo
Sattarvandi
Based on the novel *Snabba cash* by Jens Lapidus
Cinematographer
Arl Wretblad

Editor
Theis Schmidt
Production Designer
Roger Rosenberg
Composer
Jon Ekstrand
Sound Design
Rasmus Winther
Costume Designer
Denise Östholm

©Tre Vänner
Produktion AB,
Nordisk Film A/S,

Nouvago Capital
AB, Intervista digital
media GmbH
Production Companies
Tre Vänner presents in
association with Film
i Väst, Nordisk Film,
Sveriges Television,
Nouvago Capital,
Intervista digital
media, Network
Movie, ZDF/Arte
With the support

of Svenska
Filminstitutet,
Eurimages, Nordisk
Film och TV Fond,
FilmFörderung
Hamburg in co-
operation with Canal+
Executive Producer
Michael Hjorth

Cast
Joel Kinnaman
Johan 'JW' Westlund

Matias Padin Varela
Jorge
Dragomir Mrcic
Mrado
Lisa Henni
Sophie
Dejan Cukic
Radovan
Annika Whittembury
Paola
Lea Stojanov
Lovisa
Fares Fares
Mahmud

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles
Distributor
Lionsgate UK
11,235 ft +0 frames
Swedish
theatrical title
Snabba cash

Stockholm, present day. Jorge, a young Spanish man, escapes from jail with a plan to take revenge on those who snitched on him (including Serbian crime lord Radovan) and organise one huge final cocaine delivery before fleeing Sweden. Radovan's henchman Mrado is ordered to kill the well-connected Jorge before he can pass his information on to anyone else. Meanwhile JW, a promising economics student moonlighting as an illegal taxi driver, is promised 20,000 SEK by his boss Abdulkarim (a cocaine dealer) if he can bring Jorge back alive. Mrado botches the hit, and a pursuing JW rescues Jorge. Abdulkarim offers JW 1,000 SEK for every day he hosts the recovering Jorge in his dorm room. Putting his studies and society connections to use, JW devises a plan to launder the money from the

imminent cocaine shipment by buying shares in his friend's father's failing bank. JW becomes the business front of the organisation. However, JW is frustrated when Jorge informs him that he is unlikely to see any money from the deal, a situation later confirmed by Abdulkarim. Mrado, who has since fallen out of favour with Radovan and intends to return to Serbia with his young daughter, offers JW 2 million SEK for assistance in raiding Abdulkarim's drug shipment. JW agrees on the understanding that no one will get hurt. During the raid, however, there is a gunfight involving the police, who have arrived following a tipoff from Radovan. Jorge (who realises that JW has double-crossed him) and JW escape in a car. Mrado is hit by the car, then shot by JW. Jorge escapes; Mrado is last seen in an ambulance, JW in jail.

Everybody Has a Plan

Spain/Argentina/Germany 2012
Director: Anna Piterbarg
Certificate 15 118m 8s

Reviewed by Demetrios Matheou

There are many reasons to be enticed by Ana Piterbarg's first feature. Argentine cinema currently has a fine pedigree of female writer-directors, including Lucrecia Martel, Celina Murga and Lucía Puenzo, and a strong tradition of stories set in the regions and backwaters away from the capital – in this, Piterbarg's scenario has echoes of Lisandro Alonso's *Los muertos* (2004) and Santiago Otheguy's *La leon* (2007). And then there's her star, the capable Viggo Mortensen, who spent much of his childhood in Argentina, is making his fourth film in confident Spanish, and has a seemingly juicy dual role as identical twins living very different lives. Yet the film is no *Los muertos*, nor *The Passenger* for



Credits and Synopsis

Producers
Mariela Besuievsky
Gerardo Herrero
Vanessa Ragone
Viggo Mortensen
Written by
Anna Piterbarg
Director of Photography
Lucio Bonelli
Editing
Irene Blecua
Alejandro Lazaro
Production Designer
Mariela Ripodas
Music
Lucio Godoy
Federico Jusid
Sound
Eduardo Esquide
Juan Ferro
Diego Garrido
Costume Designer
Valentina Bari

©Tornasol Films,
Haddock Films,
Castafiore Films,
Terz Filmproduktion
Production Companies
Twentieth Century
Fox presents
Tornasol Films,
Haddock Films,
Castafiore Films,
Terz Filmproduktion
with Fox

International
Productions
in association with
Perceval Pictures,
Ars Magna Films,
Telefe Cine, RGM
with the participation
of TVE
with the support of
Eurimages, Council
of Europe, Programa
Ibermedia, Gobierno
de Espana,
Ministerio de
Educacion Cultura
y Deporte, ICAA,
Instituto Nacional
de Cine y Artes
Audiovisuales
with the sponsorship
of Generalitat
Valenciana
with the financing
of Instituto de
Credito Oficial
Executive Producers
Mariela Besuievsky
Vanessa Ragone
Film Extracts
Nazareno Cruz y
el lobo (1975)

Cast
Viggo Mortensen
Agustín/Pedro
Soledad Vilamil
Claudia

Daniel Fanego
Adrián
Javier Godino
Rubén
Sofía Gala
Castiglione
Rosa
Oscar Alegre
Amadeo Mendizábal
Sergio Boris
Francisco
Mendizábal
Mauricio Soto
Pablo
Nelly Cantero
Carmen

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Metrodrome
Distribution Ltd

10,632 ft +0 frames

Argentine
theatrical title
*Todos tenemos
un plan*

Argentina, the present. Pedro lives on an island in the Tigre delta. A beekeeper, he supplements his income by kidnapping for ransom with his more hardened associate Adrián. When their latest crime ends in the death of the victim, Pedro departs the delta for Buenos Aires, where he visits his identical twin brother Agustín.

Disturbed by his wife's intention to adopt a child, Agustín, a doctor, has become reclusive, causing his wife to leave him. Pedro arrives, revealing that he is dying of cancer, and asks his brother to kill him. Agustín does so. Then, seeing the chance for a new life, he leaves Pedro's body as his own and returns to the delta of his childhood, assuming his brother's identity. However, he is unaware of Pedro's sideline. Soon after his arrival he is beaten by suspicious neighbours and questioned by the police.

Agustín finds companionship with Rosa, a young woman who helped Pedro with his beehives. She realises the truth of his identity but doesn't care; the pair become lovers. Adrián comes out of hiding, assuming a return to their old ways. Agustín reluctantly agrees, but their latest kidnap also ends badly, as Agustín kills his partner and is himself fatally wounded. Rosa sits on their boat alongside the dead Agustín as it drifts out of the delta.

that matter, while failing to register in its own right. Like its central performance, it is intriguing but ultimately far too elusive.

The set-up is certainly ambitious: an escapee from a dead-end delta, tired of his comfortable life in Buenos Aires, and perhaps feeling some genetic reminder that he's out of place, grabs the chance to start again – by returning to his past. But the identity he's taken is not a safe one. There's a touch of *film noir* here, with the criminal milieu and the vulnerability created by character, identity and past lives, though the genre's dark city streets are replaced by the unfamiliar waterways of the El Tigre delta.

In her opening scenes, Piterbarg succeeds in reeling us in. As Pedro, the beekeeper brother who has remained in the delta, Mortensen has a charismatic, shaggy-bearded presence, chain-smoking while coughing his guts up, the character confident with his bees while clearly becoming distanced from his dangerous associate Adrián; and as Pedro's twin Agustín, the Buenos Aires doctor withdrawing deep inside himself, he's downright creepy. But the seeds for the film's problems – a deliberate but damaging opaqueness – are also sown in the city, where we're given an inadequate sense of Agustín's inner life or motivation (there are easier ways to avoid parenthood), and his transformation from clean-cut and respectable doctor to ill-kempt couch potato – meant as a transition towards Pedro – is absurdly schematic.

As he returns to the delta, we constantly question his reason for being there, of all places, when he shows no empathy for the place and is clearly out of his depth. When one character asks him, "And what do you want?", he has no answer. His reticence isn't so much mysterious as galling. Mortensen is clearly game, but the script doesn't help him breathe life into this troubled, stunted, reticent man. In keeping with its main character, the story itself remains in second gear. The chance to recreate the unusual, insular community of the delta isn't embraced, nor is the simpler, dramatic potential of its criminal

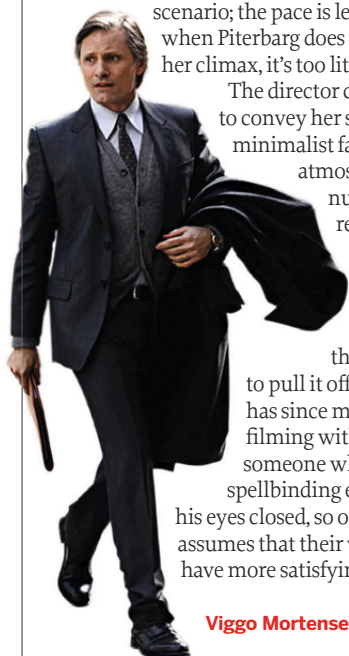
scenario; the pace is lethargic, and when Piterbarg does up the ante for her climax, it's too little, too late.

The director clearly wanted to convey her story in a minimalist fashion, through

atmosphere and nuance; it's a reasonable desire, but in her first film she doesn't have quite the experience

to pull it off. Mortensen has since moved on to filming with Alonso, someone who can achieve spellbinding enigma with his eyes closed, so one hopes and assumes that their venture will have more satisfying results. ☹

Viggo Mortensen



G.I. Joe Retaliation

USA 2013
Director: Jon M. Chu
Certificate 12A 110m 7s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Adding Dwayne Johnson to a cast seems to be a catchall solution to flagging action franchises (cf. *The Mummy Returns*, *Journey 2: The Mysterious Island*, *Fast Five*). Here he steps up when Channing Tatum, who has acted his way out of the midlist nonsense-weight category since 2009's *G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra*, is fairly unceremoniously killed off. Based on the Hasbro toys, a licensed Marvel comic and a cartoon series, this plainly isn't a film that sets out to deliver depth except in the limited sense of conversion 3D. It picks up plot threads (terrorist minion Zartan's impersonation of the US president, Storm Shadow's troubled origins) from the first film but prunes its character list, with most of the supporting Joes not reappearing. A crusty Bruce Willis cameo as yet another out-of-retirement military man replaces a raft of stooges.

Delayed from 2012 by reshoots, this is mostly average fare, which puts the world at risk (and devastates London incidentally) but seems surprisingly low-stakes. However, embedded in the middle of the hokum is one outstanding action sequence – a ninjas-on-ropes fight on the side of a Himalayan mountain that is brilliantly staged comic-book material. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Lorenzo di Bonaventura
Brian Goldner
Written by
Rhett Reese
Paul Wernick
Based on Hasbro's G.I. Joe characters
Director of Photography
Stephen Windon
Edited by
Roger Barton
Jim May
Production Designer
Andrew Menzies
Music
Henry Jackman
Supervising Sound Editors/ Sound Designers
Ethan Van Der Ryn
John Marquis
Erik Aadahl
Costume Designer
Louise Mingenbach
Stunt Co-ordinator
Steven Ritzi
Visual Effects/ Animation
Industrial Light & Magic
Special Visual Effects/ Digital Animation
Digital Domain
Visual Effects
Method Studios
Vancouver
Luma Pictures

©Paramount Pictures Corporation and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures Inc.
Production Companies
Paramount Pictures, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures and Skydance Pictures present in association with Hasbro a di Bonaventura Pictures production With the participation of The Province of British Columbia Production Services Tax Credit, The Canadian Film Production Services Tax Credit, Tax Incentive Consulting Services - Canada Film Capital
Executive Producers
Stephen Sommers
Herbert W. Gains
Erik Howsam
Gary Barber
Roger Birnbaum
David Ellison
Dana Goldberg
Paul Schwake

Cast
D.J. Cotrona
Flint
Byung-hun Lee
Storm Shadow

Adrianne Palicki
Lady Jaye
Ray Park
Snake Eyes
Jonathan Pryce
President
RZA
blind master
Ray Stevenson
Firefly
Elodie Yung
Jinx
Bruce Willis
General Joe Colton
Dwayne Johnson
Roadblock
Channing Tatum
Duke
Luke Bracey
Cobra commander
Arnold Vosloo
Zartan

Dolby Digital/ Datasat Digital Sound
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor
Paramount Pictures UK

9,910 ft +8 frames

IMAX prints
111m 13s
160,152 ft

Zartan, minion of captured terrorist Cobra Commander, has impersonated and replaced the US president. He uses his position to attack the G.I. Joes, an elite military unit, and kills field commander Duke, but Duke's friend Roadblock survives and with fellow Joes Lady Jaye, Flint and Snake Eyes goes underground to thwart Cobra Commander's plan to take over the world by deploying an orbital weapon. Storm Shadow, a Cobra minion, learns that he has been duped into serving the cause of evil and aids the Joes and retired general Colton in defeating the villains.

A Haunted House

Director: Michael Tiddes

Reviewed by Ashley Clark

Ostensibly a comic riff on Oren Peli's 2007 found-footage horror *Paranormal Activity*, with a middle-class black couple substituted for a white one, Michael Tiddes's leaden-footed, visually drab misfire immediately jettisons the pretence of generic satire to devolve into a series of painfully distended, referentially random skits (everything from *The Exorcist* to *Snakes on a Plane* is fair game). These are connected only by their unceasing scatological crassness and the string of depressingly retrograde racial and sexual stereotypes among the supporting cast.

Other than appearing in cinemas in close proximity to the similar but unrelated *Scary Movie 5*, Tiddes's film is chiefly notable for its psychotically grim view of cohabitation. Malcolm (Marlon Wayans) and Kisha (Essence Atkins) seem to despise one another; all Malcolm wants to do, despite the demonic invasion, is film himself having sex. Malcolm's compulsion to shoot *everything* fosters a certain contemporary relevance in a post-*Tarnation* (2003) world, but further thematic development dissipates in the fug of enervating puerility.

Compounding the misery is co-writer Wayans's awful, turbo-mugging performance; the promise offered by his fine dramatic turn as a tragic junkie in Darren Aronofsky's *Requiem for a Dream* (2000) seems light-years ago. But who can blame him for pursuing this line of work? He has already hit lucrative home runs on the parody circuit (notably in *Scary Movie* and *Scary Movie 2*, where he worked alongside various other Wayans family members), while *A Haunted House*'s healthy US box office – it took \$40 million, with a sequel in the works – confirms the still voracious public appetite for such witless, base and eminently dubious material. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Marlon Wayans
Rick Alvarez
Written by
Marlon Wayans
Rick Alvarez
Director of Photography
Steve Gainer
Editor
Suzanne Hines
Production Designer
Fred Andrews
Sound Mixer
Matthew Nicolay
Costume Designer
Ariyela Wald-Cohain

Baby Way production
Executive Producers
Stuart Ford
James D. Stern
Deepak Nayar
Brian Kavanaugh-Jones
Lisa Blum
Steve Squillante

Cast
Marlon Wayans
Malcolm
Essence Atkins
Kisha
Cedric the Entertainer
Father Williams
Nick Swardson
Chip, the psychic
David Koehnner
Dan, the security man
Dave Sheridan
Bob

Affion Crockett
Ray-Ray
JB Smoove
Kisha's dad
Andrew Daly
Steve
Alana Ubach
Jenny
Robin Thede
Kisha's mom
Marlene Forte
Rosa
Jordenn Thompson
little Kisha

Dolby Digital In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Vertigo Films

Los Angeles, present day. Anonymously edited found footage shows a couple, Malcolm and Kisha, moving into a new house and discovering that an invisible, poltergeist-like demon lives there. The demon terrorises the pair. When Kisha becomes possessed, Malcolm enlists the help of a priest, a psychic and two TV ghostbusters. They perform a group exorcism, but Kisha apparently remains possessed.

A Hijacking

Denmark 2012
Director: Tobias Lindholm
Certificate 15 103m 20s



Strife on the ocean wave: Pilou Asbæk

See interview
on page 15

Reviewed by Anna Fomicheva

The shaky opening shots of the Danish drama *A Hijacking* immediately introduce a slight sense of seasickness and discomfort as we see one

of the film's protagonists, ship's cook Mikkell, making a phone call to his wife and daughter. The nauseating confines of the ship and the brief but touching exchange between Mikkell and his family – the speakerphone underlining the lack of privacy – are all we need to be emotionally hooked. Such sleight of directorial hand is further on display as we are then introduced to the film's second protagonist, Peter, the CEO of the shipping company. Peter's environment is all pristine office rooms and corridors, his language tough and competitive corporate speak. When he wins a bidding war against a group of Japanese businessmen, his macho smugness is repulsive because it is so recognisable. This bidding war and its arrogant negotiation tactics are soon echoed in a whole new context as Somali pirates hijack the ship and the film develops into an excellent procedural thriller.

A Hijacking is the second film directed by Tobias Lindholm, best known to British audiences as the scriptwriter of last year's superb *The Hunt* and the TV series *Borgen*. The two leads will also be familiar to those who are following the current renaissance of Danish film and TV drama – Peter is played by the versatile Søren Malling from *The Killing*, *Borgen* and *A Royal Affair*, while Mikkell is played by Pilou Asbæk, also from *Borgen* as well as *R.*

The latter was Lindholm's 2010 directorial debut and another exploration of male tensions and survival tactics in a confined space, in that case a prison. The visual style of Lindholm's previous work is recognisable in *A Hijacking* – claustrophobic framing, disorienting cuts and

Credits and Synopsis

Producer
Tomas Radoor
René Ezra
Written by
Tobias Lindholm
Director of Photography
Magnus Nordenhof
Jonck
Editor
Adam Nielsen
Production Designer
Thomas Greve
Composer
Hildur Guðnadóttir
Sound Designer
Morten Green
Costumes
Louise Hauberg

©Nordisk Film
Production A/S
Production Companies
Nordisk Film
Production present
with support from
The Danish Film

Institute with the
participation of DR
and Nordisk Film &
TV Fund a film by
Tobias Lindholm
Produced by Nordisk
Film Production with
support from The
Danish Film Institute
with the participation
of DR and Nordisk
Film & TV Fund
Executive Producers
Henrik Zein
Lena Haugaard
Thomas Heinsen

Cast
Søren Malling
Peter C. Ludvigsen
Pilou Asbæk
Mikkell Hartmann
Dar Salim
Lars Vestergaard
Roland Møller
Jan Sørensen
Gary Skjoldmose

Porter
Connor Julian
Abidhakin Asgar
Omar
Amalie Alstrup
Maria Hartmann
Amalie Vulf
Andersen
Kamilla Hartmann
Linda Laursen
Anette Ludvigsen

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Arrow Films

9,300 ft +0 frames

Danish theatrical title
Kapringen
Onscreen English
subtitle
The Hijacking

The Indian Ocean, the present. A Danish cargo ship is hijacked by Somali pirates. The shipping company hires a professional hostage negotiator, but CEO Peter insists on communicating with the pirates himself. On the ship, cook Mikkell and the rest of the crew struggle with confined, unhygienic conditions and threatened violence. Because of the language barrier, everyone must communicate through Omar, an independent negotiator working with the pirates. Negotiations progress slowly over weeks and then months. The ship runs out of supplies, and the captain becomes dangerously ill.

Eventually a deal is secured when Peter lies that he is topping up the shipping company's offer with his personal funds. As the pirates are leaving the ship, one tries to take Mikkell's wedding ring. In the resulting standoff, the captain is shot dead. The rest of the crew return to Denmark and reunite with their families.

generous use of close-ups, none of which is breaking new ground but it's all deftly employed to create tension and a sense of panic. We never see how the ship is hijacked and we don't need to, as the post-hijacking scenes are distressing enough: oppressive both visually and sonically, though without one drop of blood. (In fact, the film's only weakness is an unnecessary shedding of blood at the very end, which feels as if the producers thought the desired emotional impact couldn't be achieved without senselessly killing off an innocent character.)

In interviews, Lindholm has stressed that he always strives for realism in his work. He filmed *A Hijacking* on a genuine cargo ship, one that had been hijacked by pirates in the past. He also cast a professional pirate negotiator, initially brought in as an adviser, in the role of a negotiator here. All of this must have been helpful on the set, but what really impresses about the film is the masterful concision of form and precision of characterisation. This allows Lindholm to focus on the complexities of the situation and the nitty-gritty of the psychological game at hand. The film's exploration of the power structure among pirates, crew and shipping company is intricate and ambiguous, so that one's loyalties and sympathies shift with every new development. The pressure on the CEO and his emotional involvement are clear, but one can't help but feel some resentment towards him, his team and their world of office desks and pie charts, as the film cuts between their cynical discussions of how to save money on the ransom and the increasingly desperate situation on board the ship.

The big and objective picture is difficult to grasp and the film isn't interested in providing it, but the bitter aftertaste of global socioeconomic inequality left by this struggle between people with money, people with guns and those caught in between is difficult to shake off. **S**

The Host

USA/Switzerland 2013
Director: Andrew Niccol
Certificate 12A 124m 53rs

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Having redefined – for good or ill – the vampire with her *Twilight* books, Stephenie Meyer turns to science fiction with her first ‘adult’ novel, *The Host*. The notion of a vampire love story is not unprecedented – there has always been a Byronic, gothic romance element to the literary undead. *The Host* – perhaps inspired by ‘The Host’, an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* which had symbiotes called ‘the Trill’ taking up residence in human bodies in much the same way that Meyer’s ‘souls’ do here – weaves a complex eternal triangle/square romance into the less obviously congenial alien bodysnatcher genre of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *The Hidden* or *The Puppet Masters*.

Director Andrew Niccol is one of the rare Hollywoodians with a demonstrable interest in literary science fiction published in the century since Edgar Rice Burroughs’s *A Princess of Mars*. As a writer (*The Truman Show*) and writer-director (*Gattaca*, *Simone, In Time*), he has specialised in satirical, pertinent dystopian visions. He tends to render his concepts commercial with a side order of chase thriller and has a knack for coming up with imagined futures in which there’s a perfectly credible reason for the entire cast to look as if they’ve stepped out of a teenage fan magazine. In his first adaptation of an actual novel, Niccol is hampered by Meyer’s clunky plotting and soap-opera characters but delivers a film with a distinctive, thought-through look, from the bland world of the alien-possessed (all white suits and polished-surface machines) to the cave-dwelling, bizarrely agrarian human resistance.

It’s full of ideas, but not all that well digested. Subtlety is the revelation that the Javert-like alien Seeker (a nicely icy Diane Kruger) is so obsessed with tracking Saoirse Ronan’s runaway host when the rest of her kind can shrug off the problem because *her* host is similarly struggling against possession and hoping the chase will be a catalyst for revolution. Mostly, however, the film revolves around the complications arising from the possession of human Melanie by alien Wanderer (‘Wanda’ for short). Meyer’s take



A force called Wanda: Saoirse Ronan

on teen romantic tangles here arises because humans Jared and Ian are in love respectively with Melanie and Wanda. This being Meyer, love is mostly expressed through hand-holding, and the question of whether Ian would love Wanda in a less Saoirse Ronan-like body is set aside when the alien is offloaded into the conveniently braindead and excruciatingly named Pet (an unbilled Emily Browning). *Star Trek*’s ‘The Host’ ends with a woman who has fallen in love with a Trill-inhabited man unable to continue the relationship when the symbiote’s next host is a woman – this is not where Meyer or Niccol want to go.

As in *Hanna* (2011) and *Byzantium* (2012), Ronan is adeptly torn between otherworldliness and human concerns, here arguing with her other self in voiceover. Max Irons (Jared) and Jake Abel (Ian) are interchangeable love objects, pallid next to *Twilight*’s vampire and werewolf beaux, which leaves Ronan on her own with herself for most of the film, up against an equal only when bantering with the human rebels’ ‘benevolent dictator’ (William Hurt). The love story that counts here is a surprising one, and *The Host*’s most affecting (but also chilling) moment comes when, after conflicts and suffering and mutual understanding, human host Melanie says ‘I love you’ to alien possessor Wanda. 📞

Hummingbird

United Kingdom/USA 2012
Director: Steven Knight
Certificate 15 100m 3s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

Screenwriter Steven Knight must keep a watchful eye on the streets of London, since this is the third thriller he’s woven around disparate underworlds existing within the daily life of the capital. First off *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002) uncovered an illicit trade in body parts, then *Eastern Promises* (2007) revealed a Russian crime dynasty ruthlessly transposed to these shores. Now *Hummingbird* uses a post-Afghanistan chase thriller to enter the subculture of rough sleepers and the charitable folks who support them. Knight – also directing for himself this time – provides a star vehicle for Jason Statham, whose role as a fugitive ex-soldier on London’s mean streets necessitates intermittent demonstration of the action icon’s brisk close-combat skills.

It sounds like an unlikely combination and in truth it plays that way, but Knight’s aspiration beyond strict genre confines is commendable – even if it asks the audience to suspend disbelief from a very great height. Statham’s performance is not the issue here, since he fits the bill pretty well as a not-overly-articulate veteran of mayhem in the villages of Helmand who’s struggling with traumatic flashbacks (where the eponymous hummingbirds enter the fray), has doused his guilt in booze and thence moved off the radar, bedding down each night in a Covent Garden alleyway. The intervention of some violent small-time thugs separates him from his girlfriend, precipitating a search narrative facilitated by Agata Buzek’s helpful nun Cristina, who runs the area’s nightly soup kitchen for the homeless. In the event, the search for the missing girl turns out to be the film’s least engrossing element, while the relationship between Statham and the Polish sister of mercy proves the most intriguing – and problematic – aspect of the story.

While our credulity is most tested by Statham finding himself a convenient base in a swish, rent-free apartment (together with credit card plus PIN! A car plus keys!), the deepening bond between social outsider and spiritual guardian provides an intriguing moral pivot. Will her good



Down and doubt: Jason Statham

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Nick Wechsler
Steve Schwartz
Paula Mae Schwartz
Stephenie Meyer
Adapted for the screen by
Andrew Niccol
Based on the novel by Stephenie Meyer
Director of Photography
Roberto Schaefer
Editor
Thomas J. Nordberg
Production Designer
Andy Nicholson
Music
Antonio Pinto
Production Sound Mixer
Steve C. Aaron
Costume Designer
Erin Benach

©The Host Film Holdings, LLC
Production

Companies
Open Road presents in association with IAV International a Silver Reel/Nick Wechsler/Chockstone Pictures production
Executive Producers
Jim Seibel
Bill Johnson
Marc Butan
Claudia Bluemhuber
Uwe R. Feuersenger
Ray Angelic

Cast
Saoirse Ronan
Melanie Stryder/Wanderer, ‘Wanda’
Jake Abel
Ian O’Shea
Max Irons
Jared Howe
Frances Fisher
Maggie Stryder
Chandler
Canterbury

Jamie Stryder
Diane Kruger
Seeker/Lacey
William Hurt
Jeb Stryder
Boyd Holbrook
Kyle
Scott Lawrence
Doc
Rachel Roberts
Soul Fleur
Shyaam Karra
Soul Anshu
Brent Wendell
Williams
Soul Winters

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Entertainment Film Distributors Ltd

11,239 ft +8 frames

The future. Most of the human race has been subjugated by alien symbiotes (‘souls’) who have remade the Earth as a harmonious, bland society. Melanie Stryder, one of the last human rebels, attempts suicide to evade the aliens’ police force and protect her younger brother Jamie and boyfriend Jared. The Wanderer, a soul, is put into Melanie’s body but the human host doesn’t become completely dormant and persuades the Wanderer to find Jamie and Jared, who live in a desert cavern with a resistance group led by Melanie’s uncle Jeb. Jared is repulsed by the being in his girlfriend’s body but another young man, Ian, develops feelings for the Wanderer. Coming to sympathise with humanity and her host, the Wanderer uses alien medicine to save Jamie’s life when he injures himself. The Seeker, an alien obsessed with finding the resistance, tracks them down, and the Wanderer shows how the soul can be separated from the host and despatched to the other side of the universe. The Wanderer is willing to give up her life when Melanie is restored, but Jeb has her put into the body of a catatonic girl so that she can stay with the resistance.

The Iceman

USA 2012
Director: Ariel Vromen
Certificate 15 105m 39s

Reviewed by Adam Howard

Pitched somewhere between biopic and mob thriller, *The Iceman* suffers from a major pitfall of the former genre – namely that it's extremely difficult to impose a strong narrative arc on actual events – while trying its very best to be the latter. The story of Richard 'The Iceman' Kuklinski, the loving family man who also happened to be one of the most prolific contract killers in American history, has the makings of a compelling crime drama but director Ariel Vromen can't find anything to drive the narrative, resulting in a film that feels like nothing more than one murder scene after another.

The trouble is that we never get to know our lead character well enough, despite him being in almost every frame. Michael Shannon delivers his now trademark unhinged performance with flair, but the script doesn't give him nearly enough to work with, never looking behind his dead eyes to find out what makes him tick. This would be fine if it felt like a deliberate choice to depict him as a cold, motiveless, sociopathic killer, but his devotion to his family and a thunderingly unsubtle flashback to his childhood suggest instead a director failing to reconcile depth and scope. There's simply too much to get through for any of it to have any weight – digressions into the workings of the Gambino crime family, with whom Kuklinski becomes embroiled, distract more than they add, and in the final 45 minutes of the film the cast balloons to the point that it becomes hard to keep track of who's who.

That's not to say that individual moments don't have real flair. The club scene in which Kuklinski kills a man by blowing cyanide in his face on a pounding dance floor effects real horror at Kuklinski's cold, calculating ruthlessness, and the opening scene between him and his future wife Deborah (Winona Ryder) has an intimacy and tenderness beyond the cliché into which their relationship eventually descends. Sadly, though, these bright spots are few and far between, the life they inject into the film



Running on empty: Chris Evans

only emphasising the lifelessness elsewhere. The overall visual style is very bland indeed, indebted to Coppola and Scorsese but vastly inferior to them, and frequently missing potential iconography. The ice-cream truck driven by fellow hitman Robert Pronge (Chris Evans, happily sinking his teeth into his meatiest role yet), for example, is an image that would have been seized on by those more accomplished visual directors, but instead we're given only fleeting glimpses of it. Nothing dispels the feeling that Vromen is struggling to match his influences.

The film aims at being both a sprawling gangster epic and an intimate character portrait, and as a result it satisfies as neither. Every time we get a hint of what's going on behind Kuklinski's steely visage, we have to cut away to a scene full of characters we barely know, and every time the inner workings of the Gambino clan become compelling, we cut back to Kuklinski's family. Perhaps a better edit, one emphasising character over incident, would have given us a film more worthy of its mostly extremely talented cast. Instead it feels as if it's constantly rushing on to the next thing, a hollow procession of events creating tedium by actively avoiding the interesting. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Paul Webster Guy Heeley	production A film by Steven Knight	Christian Brassington Max Forrester
Written by Steven Knight	Executive Producers Stuart Ford	Danny Webb Damon
Director of Photography Chris Menges	Brian Kavanaugh-Jones Deepak Nayar	Sang Lui Tony
Editor Valerio Bonelli	Joe Wright	Bruce Wang Tim
Production Designer Michael Carlin	Cast Jason Statham Joey	Dai Bradley Billy
Music Dario Marianelli	Agata Buzek Sister Cristina	Siobhan Hewlett Tracey
Production Sound Mixer John Casali	Vicky McClure Dawn	Steven Beard Karl
Costume Designer Louise Stjernsward	Benedict Wong Mr Choy	Dolby Digital/ Datasat In Colour [2.35:1]
Stunt Co-ordinator Tom Struthers	Ger Ryan mother superior	Distributor Lionsgate UK
©Hummingbird Film Investments LLC.	Youssef Kerkour Bouzanis	9,004 ft + 8 frames
Production Companies IM Global presents a Shoeboxfilms	Anthony Morris taxman	
	Victoria Bewick Isabel	

Helmand province, Afghanistan. Helicopter surveillance tracks a British soldier firing in a crowded village.

London, a year later. Joey is sleeping rough when thugs attack. Separated from girlfriend Isabel, he takes refuge in a vacant apartment and soon moves in, stealing the owner's credit card and drinking himself senseless. He asks Sister Cristina, who runs a soup kitchen, to find Isabel, then cleans up his act, working as a kitchen porter in Chinatown, where his fighting skills land him a job as an underworld henchman. Joey buys food for the homeless and offers Cristina cash; she impulsively spends the money on a ticket to the ballet. Joey learns that Isabel was drawn into prostitution and then murdered. He takes part in deadly human trafficking for his Chinese bosses so that they will identify the sadistic client responsible for the killing. Cristina, who knows that Joey is on the run from a court martial, urges him to question his morality. She reveals the sexual abuse she suffered as a child in Poland; he is haunted by the atrocities he committed in Afghanistan. They make love in Joey's flat just before the owner returns. Cristina takes photographs of a besuited Joey to prove his worth to his estranged wife and daughter. She watches the ballet alone while Joey pushes the killer to his death off a Canary Wharf balcony. Joey realises that he's a killing-machine when sober, so he returns to drink and to the streets.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Avi Lerner Ariel Vromen Ehud Bleiberg	with a Killer by James Thebaut	©Killer Productions, Inc.	Rabbit Bandini Productions Danny Dimbort Trevor Short Boaz Davidson Mark Gill	Ray Liotta Roy Demeo Chris Evans Mr Freezy David Schwimmer Josh Rosenthal Robert Davi Leonard Merks Danny Abecasker Dino Lapron John Ventimiglia Mickey Scicoli Ryan O'Nan Terry Franz McKale Miller Anabel	Megan Sherrill Betsy Stephen Dorff Joey Kuklinski
Screenplay Morgan Land Ariel Vromen Based upon the fictional book written by Anthony Bruno entitled <i>The Iceman: The True Story of a Cold Blooded Killer</i> and the documentary entitled <i>The Iceman Tapes: Conversations</i>	Director of Photography Bobby Bukowski Edited by Danny Rafic Production Designer Nathan Ammondson Music Haim Mazar Sound Mixer Dick Hansen Costume Designer Donna Zakowska	Production Companies A Millennium Films presentation of an Ehud Bleiberg/Nu Image production An Ariel Vromen film Executive Producers Nicholas Donnermeyer Lati Grobman Laura Rister Rene Besson John Thompson	Cast Michael Shannon Richard Kuklinski Winona Ryder Deborah Pellicotti James Franco Marty Freeman	Dolby Digital In Colour [1.85:1]	Distributor Lionsgate UK 9,508 ft +8 frames

New York, the 1960s. Richard Kuklinski dates Deborah, hiding a violent streak from her and lying that he dubs Disney animations for a living. They marry and have a baby; he works at a theatre pirating porn until he attracts the attention of Roy DeMeo, a mid-level member of the Gambino crime family who hires Kuklinski regularly after he proves himself by killing an innocent homeless man in cold blood.

Eleven years later, Kuklinski has two daughters and is still working for DeMeo and his supervisor Leo Marks, telling Deborah that he makes his money playing

the stock market. After a hit goes awry and he allows a witness to escape, he meets Robert Pronge, who drives an ice-cream truck and disguises the time of death of his victims by freezing them and dumping the body months later. They begin killing people together, eventually attracting the ire of the Gambino family, who injure Kuklinski's daughter in a hit-and-run. DeMeo is killed by Marks; Kuklinski kills Marks and his hitman. He kills Pronge after the latter suggests that they kill each other's families. He is eventually arrested after he accepts a fake hit from an undercover cop.

Iron Man 3

USA 2013
Director: Shane Black
Certificate 12A 130m 22s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Initiating the 'second phase' of Marvel's integrated movie plan – the first culminated in the team-up excess of last year's *Avengers Assemble* – this finds Robert Downey Jr's Tony Stark/Iron Man, very much the central figure of the company's overall design, back on his own but suffering superheroic performance anxiety, as living in a world now demonstrably populated by aliens, gods and monsters makes his technology-assisted efforts seem less remarkable. *Iron Man 3* also makes an effort to bring on new readers, or at least those who only joined the story with the *Avengers* movie, by starting from scratch with a 1999 prologue (establishing how a nerd humiliated can make a supervillain origin) and not drawing too much on plot threads outside Iron Man's core title.

In the comics, AIM were an offshoot of Hydra, the ex-Nazi bad guys seen in *Captain America: The First Avenger* (2011), but here writer-director Shane Black makes them another business/technology rival for Stark, and develops AIM's head honcho Aldrich Killian (Guy Pearce) as a dark doppelganger for the already troubled hero. Transformed from a limping geek into a handsome boardroom shark by the 'Extremis' process – which changes a person's insides in an inversion of Stark's life-preserving armoured exoskeleton – he even dares to horn in on Pepper Potts (Gwyneth Paltrow), with whom Stark has been forging a grown-up relationship over the course of four films. Downey Jr's showboating Stark is caught in a perpetual tug-of-war between maturity and irresponsibility, but needs to maintain a certain wiseass attitude (sometimes he might as well be called Tony Snark) to stay as entertaining as he is.

Like Joss Whedon, Black has a solid screenwriting CV but comes to this blockbuster after a single, culty directorial credit (2005's *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*). With Jon Favreau, director of the previous *Iron Man* films, still around in his sidekick role as Happy Hogan (in a coma for most of the film, but given more dignity than when Favreau was directing himself), continuity is maintained, but Black does bring his own, mostly comic chops to the saga.

Without shifting completely into camp, *Iron Man 3* relaxes a bit between its astoundingly spectacular set-piece battles, rescues and stunts. A minor AIM goon gives up rather than get shot down like a thousand unbelievably motivated minions in superhero films going back to the serials of the 30s and 40s, explaining, "I don't even like working here." A closing credits sequence has a 1970s television vibe, with a catchy theme tune, and there's a sense of fun in some of the unexpected character turns. Ben Kingsley delivers a new spin on a Fu Manchu knockoff villain who *seems* to have been reinvented as a cross between Osama bin Laden and the puppet baddie Kingsley played in 2004's *Thunderbirds*, but then goes in a very different direction. A mid-film stretch in which Tony, forced to improvise technology in a small town, hooks up with an admiring little kid, is a very funny subversion of the obsessions of American cinema in general and superhero movies in particular ("Fathers leave, don't be a pussy, get over it") yet still lets the most over-resourced hero in the



Suited and booted: Robert Downey Jr and Gwyneth Paltrow

book get back to cobbling together solutions from scraps and demonstrating that childish enthusiasm and ingenuity are as admirable as childish petulance and insecurity are annoying.

Given that one of the few real positive elements of the scrappy *Iron Man 2* (2010) was the growth in the female characters and Tony's increasing respect for them, it seems for a while that this is returning Pepper to the traditional role of nag-cum-hostage. At one point it looks as if the film might write her out – sustaining a superhero relationship past meet-cute has even been a challenge for Superman – but Black hauls Paltrow out of the fire (literally) for a final burst of action in which, fulfilling Gal Friday fantasies, she goes one-on-one with the film's big bad while her boss is temporarily lying about being useless. If nothing else, this series deserves credit for unloosing Paltrow's sense of fun... here

she gets superpowers (briefly?) and trounces a villain, then has a sweetly self-conscious moment ("Oh wow, that was really violent").

In creating its own developing, overlapping universe, Marvel is trying something that has few precedents in film – the Universal monster series of the 1940s comes closest – and that runs the risk of each individual movie feeling like a set-up for the next one (*Thor* and *Captain America* suffered a touch of this). But Black is intent on not going down that route, and little here feels like foundation-laying for the *Thor*, *Captain America* or *Avengers* sequels or such in-development properties as *Ant-Man*, *Dr Strange* and *Guardians of the Galaxy*. The now-traditional post-credits sting isn't a hook for the next story – Samuel L. Jackson's Nick Fury sits this one out and another Avenger puts in a welcome appearance – but a nice piece of character comedy that ties up this package. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producer
Kevin Feige
Screenplay
Drew Pearce
Shane Black
Director of Photography
John Toll
Editors
Jeffrey Ford
Peter S. Elliot
Production Designer
Bill Brzeski
Composer
Brian Tyler
Production Sound Mixer
Peter J. Devlin
Costume Designer
Louise Frogley
Stunt Co-ordinator
Jeff Habberstad

@[TBC]
Production Companies
Marvel Studios
presents in association with Paramount Pictures and DMG

Entertainment a
Marvel Studios
production
Executive Producers
Stan Lee
Dan Mintz
Alan Fine
Charles Newirth
Victoria Alonso
Stephen Broussard
Louis D'Esposito
Jon Favreau

Cast

Robert Downey Jr
Tony Stark, 'Iron Man'
Gwyneth Paltrow
Virginia 'Pepper' Potts
Don Cheadle
Colonel James
'Rhodey' Rhodes,
'War Machine'
Guy Pearce
Aldrich Killian
Rebecca Hall
Dr Maya Hansen
Stephanie Szostak
Ellen Brandt
James Badge Dale
Eric Savin

Jon Favreau
Happy Hogan
Ben Kingsley
The Mandarin
Ty Simpkins
Harley
William Sadler
President Ellis
Paul Bettany
voice of Jarvis,
the computer

Dolby Digital/
Datasat/SDDS
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Some screenings
presented in 3D

Distributor
Buena Vista
International (UK)

11,733 ft +0 frames

After facing an alien invasion with fellow heroes the Avengers, Tony Stark, aka Iron Man, suffers post-traumatic anxiety attacks. The Mandarin, a shadowy terrorist, issues threats against America and claims responsibility for bomb attacks. Aldrich Killian, head of Advanced Idea Mechanics, tries to enlist Stark's assistance in perfecting the 'Extremis' process developed by Dr Maya Hansen. Extremis creates superhumans and regenerates lost limbs, but an occasional side effect is spontaneous combustion. With his sidekick Happy Hogan in a coma after tracking an Extremis patient who exploded, Tony issues a challenge to the Mandarin. The Mandarin responds by destroying Stark's home just as Maya comes to plead for help, alleging that Killian is in league with the terrorist. Thought dead, Stark cobbles together technology and investigates, discovering that the Mandarin is an actor hired as a front for AIM. Turncoat Maya is killed by Killian, who intends to assassinate the president using Extremis technology and an Iron Man suit hijacked from Tony's friend James Rhodes, a presidential bodyguard, so that an AIM-friendly vice president can assume power. Killian motivates Tony to work on stabilising Extremis by using the process on Pepper Potts, Tony's girlfriend. The president is kidnapped but Tony, Rhodes and Pepper rescue him and defeat Killian's forces.

It's Such a Beautiful Day

USA 2012

Director: Don Hertzfeldt

Reviewed by Nick Bradshaw

See
interview
online

Don Hertzfeldt graduated from the University of California, Santa Barbara in 1998 with a precocious reputation for crudely tooled but virtuosically timed black-comic cartoons

that caricatured the perils of romance and social interaction (*Ah, L'Amour*, 1995, *Lily and Jim*, 1997) or dramatised with Keatonesque conviction the world's animosity for the innocent (*Billy's Balloon*, 1998). The tenor chimed with the almost self-parodying emotiveness of early Radiohead and the faux-naïve social satire of *South Park*, which might explain the cult popularity that has enabled Hertzfeldt to become one of the very few independent animators in the world who has never needed a day job.

And he has served his talent. *Rejected* (2000), which 'showcased' a series of increasingly misbegotten idents for public and private sponsors, not only stuck two fingers in the eyes of other animators' corporate employers, but folded new layers of graphic and narrative expression around the piecemeal slapstick, toying with a mock-subtext of Hertzfeldt's own psychic breakdown. *The Meaning of Life* (2005) stretched its purview to encompass the entire species (and beyond) across aeons; for all its baiting sarcasm and misanthropy, it also flaunted a command of the cosmic majestic through rich in-camera effects and Romantic-classical music cues.

Still, none of this betrayed the layers of empathy, irony, vision and technique that Hertzfeldt would bring to the table in his next three films – *Everything Will Be Okay*, *I Am So Proud of You* and *It's Such a Beautiful Day* – which he has now compiled into an hour-long feature, a passion play about the bewilderment, traumas and grace of an everystickman named Bill (The movie is getting a short UK run, but is also available to stream or download in HD from Hertzfeldt's website, bitterfilms.com). Its aesthetic baseline remains Hertzfeldt's pencil line drawings, here contained in fuzzy blob-shaped matte-screen apertures that both induce a sense of human isolation and facilitate point-counterpoint visual gags. But we now have Hertzfeldt's omniscient voiceover narrating Bill's internal monologues and more, and the head-spinning accretion of seemingly random ironic minutiae quickly brings us inside the head of a man for whom, we come to realise, life's puzzles are made more pronounced because his mind is unstable. It's with some reason that Bill dreams of a monstrous fish head which feeds on his skull: he has an unspecified ailment that appears to be early-onset dementia, with bonus physical degeneration.

Here we're in the terrain of Australian claymator Adam Elliot, with his dark affective comedies of life's also-rans (*Harvie Krumpet*, 2003, *Mary and Max*, 2009). "[Bill] began to think of everyone in a new light: how everyone's just little more than that frightened, fragile brain stem, surrounded by meat and physics, too terrified to recognise the sum of their parts, insulated by the shape of their skulls in lower-middle-class houses, afraid of change, afraid of decisions, afraid of pain, stuck in traffic listening to terrible music... His neighbour stared at him and said, 'Last night I dreamt all my toes fell off.'" Hertzfeldt's writing and delivery – not quite



Two's company: 'It's Such a Beautiful Day'

Credits and Synopsis

Producer Don Hertzfeldt	Sound Don Hertzfeldt	In Colour [1.37:1]
Writer Don Hertzfeldt	Animator Don Hertzfeldt	Distributor ICA Films
Camera Don Hertzfeldt	Editor Brian Hamblin Don Hertzfeldt	
Original Music	narrator Don Hertzfeldt	

An animated cartoon using pencil line drawings, screen-splitting matte apertures, third-person internal monologue, impressionistic sound design, classical music and occasional treated live-action imagery to detail the life of Bill, an American everystickman suffering from an unspecified ailment with symptoms of both physical decline and early-onset dementia.

In chapter one ('Everything Will Be Okay'), Bill's reflections on the daily minutiae of his life are undercut by memory loss, perceptual and physical decline and paranoid hallucinations. A nervous breakdown and hospitalisation bring relatives to Bill's deathbed, but the portents lift and he takes the bus home.

In chapter two ('I Am So Proud of You'), Bill detaches from the present to consider the continuum of his life: he summons memories of his childhood and stories of the hapless fate of many family members, picks through the effects of his newly deceased mother and speculates on his own demise. An optimistic medical appraisal is swiftly followed by a massive stroke.

In chapter three ('It's Such a Beautiful Day'), Bill is awaiting further test results and losing all memory, but he begins to seize the day, soaking up the world's wonders during walks around the block. Barely self-conscious, he finds a character who may be his lost father in a nursing home, and the two make peace. Finally, Bill transcends mortality and merges with the infinite.

deadpan but permanently, ambivalently perplexed – are things of wonder, hitting bittersweet notes of human irresolution ("At home he makes toast... but changes his mind"), idiosyncratic passions ("He enjoyed wood"), existential ambivalence ("The sparrows have already begun to rebuild but he's not sure if he feels happy or sad for them") and futility ("This morning he couldn't remember where he'd put the clinic's daily memory quizzes").

Of course, he knows when to shut up too: the protracted battle between a leaf blower and a motionless leaf that Bill watches blankly is pure Buster Keaton, while Bill's reaction to a bleak medical prognosis is heartrending in its Carveresque simplicity (one stick hand takes off his pork-pie hat, the other rubs the back of his bald pate plaintively). And just as the dare-you-to-take-it-seriously Romantic music from *The Meaning of Life* persists, so Hertzfeldt increasingly flexes his visual muscles with experimental flights of analogue celluloid abstraction and impressionism; his expressions of Bill's paranoid schizophrenia channel the direct line to human consciousness of avant-garde filmmakers like Stan Brakhage.

Bill is watching the sea, young again. "Someone sits on the shore and tells him how the waves have been there long before Bill existed, and that they'd still be there long after he's gone. Bill looks out at the water and thinks of all the wonderful things he will do with his life." The moment is ironised, of course – it's a memory that hits him just after a stroke has curtailed his first feelings of optimism in months – but even then the film is not so simple, and Bill does somehow seize the day, in his mind. Hertzfeldt reaches for the stars, and takes his protagonist with him. Call the finale Kubrickian or Malickian, but for my money Hertzfeldt's sense of humour gets him further than either. **S**

The Lords of Salem

United Kingdom/USA/Canada 2012

Director: Rob Zombie

Certificate: not submitted 96m



Bewitched: 'The Lords of Salem'

Reviewed by Matthew Taylor

The Lords of Salem is – excepting 2009's straight-to-DVD animation *The Haunted World of El Superbeasto* – horror throwback specialist Rob Zombie's first wholly original feature in eight years, following a sabbatical spent exhuming Michael Myers for a brace of redundant *Halloween* revamps. However, original might be pushing it – with his latest, never have Zombie's magpie inclinations been so transparent. If *House of 1000 Corpses* (2003) and its more accomplished follow-up *The Devil's Rejects* (2005) primarily mined the rancid family dynamic of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *Lords of Salem* resembles a bulging grab-bag of none-too-subtle homages that swiftly descends into incoherence.

The director's cut-and-paste tendencies extend back to the grindhouse stylings of his former band White Zombie, sample-heavy metal brimming with references to exploitation, mondo and B-flicks. With *Lords*, Zombie cannily exploits rock 'n' roll's enduring occult connotations for his film's supernatural macguffin: an enigmatic vinyl record which when broadcast (backwards, naturally) releases a witches' curse on modern-day Salem. Unwittingly responsible is recovering addict Heidi Hawthorne (played by Zombie's wife and regular star Sheri Moon), rock DJ for an excruciating late-night radio show that mirthlessly milks Salem's morbid history for all it's worth (one of the film's many incredulities is why anyone would bother listening in the first place). Though she doesn't know it, Heidi is a descendant of the witch-hunter who exterminated satanist Margaret Morgan (a scenery-chomping Meg Foster) and her coven in 1692. Further airings of the record – an ear-splitting dirge that sounds like The Velvet Underground's 'Heroin' spun at the wrong speed – lead Heidi to unravel, having visions of the gnarled coven sacrificing babies, cavorting nude and finally being burnt at the stake. These tangibly grimy flashbacks are some of the most genuinely arresting moments in a movie

overloaded with lurid visual non sequiturs.

The Lords of Salem's premise is nothing new: the sinister record is a retro carrier of doom and contamination akin to the videotapes of *Ringu* and *Videodrome*, the reel-to-reel recording of *Evil Dead*, or even the parchment of *Night of the Demon*. And given Zombie's most recent credits, it's interesting to note similarities to the unloved standalone third entry in the *Halloween* cycle, *Season of the Witch* (1982), in which a malignant jingle induces mass hypnosis. No matter how hard the director strives for distinctive imagery, it generally feels second-hand – claustrophobic interiors, duplicitous neighbours and a demon seed straight from *Rosemary's Baby*, faceless surgeons from *Jacob's Ladder* and baroque production design that recalls Dario Argento's *Inferno*. A sequence where Heidi is drawn towards

an ominous presence in an adjacent apartment is lifted wholesale from *The Shining's* room 237 scene, complete with amplified heartbeat on the soundtrack. Later, Zombie channels Ken Russell for a barrage of psychedelic tableaux – priapic priests, a hellish blob squawking along to Mozart's Requiem – but mostly comes up short. The shock tactics grow drearily repetitive, and what's left is sloppily paced and poorly edited. Lengthy tracking shots of Moon and Bruce Davison (as a snooping author who laughably deduces Heidi's ancestry from 30 seconds' googling) trudging around an overcast Salem fail to produce the presumably intended ominous atmosphere, while Heidi is such a cipher that it's difficult to invest in her descent. The film has its moments, but ultimately Zombie plunges down the rabbit hole only for it to cave in around him. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Rob Zombie
Jason Blum
Andy Gould
Oren Peli

Written by

Rob Zombie

Director of

Photography

Brandon Trost

Editor

Glenn Garland

Production Designer

Jennifer Spence

Music

John 5

Griffin Boice

Production

Sound Mixer

Buck Robinson

Costume Designer

Leah Butler

©Alliance Films

(UK) Limited

Production

Companies

Alliance Films

presents in

association with IM

Global a Haunted

Movies production

A Rob Zombie film
With the participation
of The State of
California, California
Film Commission and
The Commonwealth
of Massachusetts
Executive Producers
Brian Kavanaugh-
Jones
Steven Schneider

Cast

Sheri Moon Zombie
Heidi Hawthorne
Bruce Davison
Francis Matthias
Jeff Daniel Phillips
Herman 'Whitey'
Salvador
Ken Foree
Herman Jackson
Patricia Quinn
Megan
Dee Wallace
Sonny
Maria Conchita
Alonso
Alice Matthias
Judy Geeson
Lacy Doyle

Meg Foster
Margaret Morgan
Richard Fancy
AJ Kennedy
Andrew Prine
Reverend Jonathan
Hawthorne
Michael Berryman
Virgil Magnus
Sid Haig
Dean Magnus
Bonita Friedericy
Abigail Hennessey
Nancy Linehan
Charles
Clovis Hales

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
E1/Momentum

Not submitted
for theatrical
classification
Video certificate: 18
Running time:
96m 34s

Salem, the 17th century. Witch-hunter Jonathan Hawthorne oversees the execution of a coven led by Margaret Morgan.

In the present day, radio DJ Heidi, a recovering junkie and descendant of Hawthorne, receives a mysterious vinyl record from a band named The Lords. When played on air, the record has trance-like effects on Salem's women, while Heidi experiences visions of Morgan's coven. Heidi becomes convinced that a malign presence resides in a vacant neighbouring apartment. She relapses into addiction, and her hallucinations and nightmares increase. Heidi's landlady Lacy and her friends Megan and Sonny reveal themselves to be devil-worshippers, and keep Heidi imprisoned. Heidi has recurring visions of herself delivering a demonic offspring. Local author Francis Matthias learns that Morgan cursed Hawthorne and his descendants before her death. Learning of Heidi's ancestry, Matthias attempts to visit her but is murdered by Lacy. The Lords hold a free concert in town, which Heidi and many of the town's women attend. The Lords – in reality Morgan's coven – hypnotise the crowd with their music. Heidi appears to give birth to a grotesque creature and afterwards is shown exalted above the unconscious townswomen. A subsequent news report describes a mass suicide at the concert; Heidi has disappeared.

Mud

Director: Jeff Nichols
Certificate 12A 130m 6s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

In director Jeff Nichols's movies, it's indubitably a man's world. And a pretty uncomfortable place it is too. Only three films into his career, he's already carved out a specialist niche examining several different types of male crisis – in the feuding brothers of *Shotgun Stories* (2007), the unsettling psycho-or-psychic paternal anxiety of *Take Shelter* (2011), and now a sensitive coming-of-age tale in which a pair of Arkansas teenagers hatch a getaway plot for a charismatic love-obsessed outlaw.

Markedly different in tone from the apocalyptic jitters of its predecessor, *Mud* is a lyrical, likeably laconic piece of Americana, a boy's-own Southern adventure story played out on a deserted island and a mighty river, packed with wild tales, broken promises, deadly snakes and frozen fish. Nichols, an Arkansas native, gives his delta drama a strong sense of place, as sensitive 14-year-old Ellis and cynical best friend Neckbone roam the deserted Mississippi waterways where their families scratch a living oyster-diving and trap-fishing, covertly seeking parts for the tree-lodged boat that could carry righteous murderer Mud and his estranged lover Juniper to safety.

Respectful of the tough realities of a working-class community eroded by urban migration, the film's taciturn portrait of delta life forms a thoughtful, unexpected corrective to 'redneckploitation' TV reality shows like *Buckwild* or *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo*, in which Southern blue-collar rural pastimes are treated as camera-ready exotica. There's a noticeable whiff of Mississippi history coming off Nichols's screenplay too, nimble nods to Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer in the boys' fugitive-aiding exploits and in the dangers they're exposed to by Mud. As Neckbone's Uncle Galen (a self-effacing Michael Shannon) gently warns Ellis: "This river brings a lot of trash down with it – you gotta know what's worth keeping, and what's worth letting go."

It's to Nichols's credit that this high and low cultural mix seems unforced and inventive, strongly aided by the film's simple but sweeping widescreen compositions. Nothing about the film feels small, despite the use of Ellis's POV, which marvels at everything from the yawning forbidden vistas of the river to the infuriating betrayals of adult love affairs. That said, you do sense (albeit not as strongly as in another river fairytale, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*) that there's a town called Malick close by. *Mud*'s loose, roaming visuals and the way it entwines nature in the narrative are dreamily Malickian – an impression that's reinforced by having Ellis played by Tye Sheridan (*The Tree of Life*) and stacking the story with fraught father-and-son relationships. In good Southern style, daddies (or daddy figures) and their failings are key to the narrative, with both Mud and Ellis cast down and then ultimately raised up by men they idolise.

Women are the dream-killers here, perfidy personified all the way from Ellis's flinty divorce-seeking mother and his cruel teen-crush May Pearl to Reese Witherspoon's weary good-time girl Juniper. Nichols draws his women smartly (particularly Juniper, creased with love and inchoate frustration at Mud's antics) but he's really only interested in how they affect his male characters. Ellis's loss of innocence, which forms



Muddling through: Tye Sheridan and Matthew McConaughey

the film's main arc, may be triggered by Mud's 'giving up' on Juniper, but it's fanned by female fickleness. Like Leo in *The Go-Between*, Ellis is exhilarated by the storybook possibilities of Mud's star-crossed romance (Sheridan, narrowed with concentration and contempt for the complications and hoodlums bedevilling his vagabond friend, conveys this effortlessly).

In the lead, Matthew McConaughey is marvellously watchable, his swaggering, tattered, story-spinning Mud equal parts charlatan and chevalier parfait, guying the easy romcom charm that the actor is shucking off nowadays.

Were the film a little less in love with him, it might have delivered an ending that felt more organic than engineered. As it is, *Mud*'s appreciable narrative strengths and relatable story are undermined by its gradual slide into conventional resolution. Having stoked the tension expertly, peppering it with the exquisite disappointments of adolescence, the film chooses the kind of payoff that it's been gently deflating all along. When it closes the gap between Mud's braggadocio and his farewell heroism, it becomes not just a long tale (at a baggy 130 minutes, it overstates its welcome) but a tall one. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Sarah Green
Aaron Ryder
Lisa Maria Falcone

Written by

Jeff Nichols

Director of

Photography

Adam Stone

Editor

Julie Monroe

Production Designer

Richard A. Wright

Composer

David Wingo

Sound Mixer

Ethan Andrus

Costume Designer

Kari Perkins

Cast

Matthew

McConaughey

Mud

Tye Sheridan

Ellis

Sam Shepard

Tom Blankenship

Michael Shannon

Galen

Jacob Lofland

Neckbone

Reese Witherspoon

Juniper

Sarah Paulson

Mary Lee

Ray McKinnon

Senior

Paul Sparks

Carver

Joe Don Baker

King

Johnny Cheek

Kyle

Bonnie Sturdivant

May Pearl

Stuart Greer

Miller

Clayton Carson

Pryor

Glen Basner

Executive Producers

Tom Heller

Gareth Smith

Glen Basner

Dolby Digital/

Datasat

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

El Films

11,709 ft +0 frames

The Arkansas Delta, present day. Fourteen-year-old Ellis and his friend Neckbone meet storytelling outlaw Mud, who is hiding out on a deserted river island. They help him mend an abandoned boat so that he can escape down the Mississippi. The boys find Mud's longtime love Juniper hiding out in a local motel, and take letters between the pair. Mud killed Juniper's husband in a fight, for causing her to miscarry by beating her. Ellis courts an older girl, May Pearl, and assumes that he is her boyfriend. Ellis's parents are splitting up and leaving their houseboat on the river. Mud's old friend Tom is reluctant to help Mud. Juniper's former father-in-law King brings a hired posse to town to kill Mud. They suspect that the boys are hiding him. Juniper fails to join Mud at his hideout, and Ellis is rejected by May Pearl. A disillusioned Ellis fights with Mud. Running away, he is bitten by deadly cottonmouth snakes in a creek. Mud risks capture rushing him to hospital by motorboat, and Ellis's life is saved. Mud appears at Ellis's window that night to say goodbye. King and his crew open fire on the houseboat. Defending Mud, Tom shoots and kills King's other son. Mud is also shot and falls into the river, presumed dead.

Ellis moves into town and is reconciled to life off the river. Tom drives Mud's boat into the Gulf of Mexico, with the wounded but recovering Mud on board.

No One Lives

United Kingdom/USA 2012
Director: Ryuhei Kitamura
Certificate 18 86m 8s

Reviewed by Matthew Taylor

An implacable bogeyman, a conspicuously lawless backwoods setting, an abundance of gleefully callous bloodshed: fundamentally, *No One Lives* reaffirms its winningly blunt title as a no-frills stalk-and-slash trifle. But it has a trick up its sleeve, albeit nothing to make the Joss Whedons of this world pause for thought: its victims are not the usual nubile college kids but a noxious, dim-witted criminal gang who quickly regret antagonising the ostensibly unassuming road-tripper (played by rising British star Luke Evans) they run into after a robbery gone wrong. Once this cat is out of the bag – although publicity shots of Evans's grinning visage within blood-red titles aren't exactly ambiguous – the ensuing carnage plays out fairly mechanically but with a distinctly insincere, smirking shrug of the shoulders.

On first impression, the movie appears irredeemably clunky, even amateurish. David Cohen's debut script does out repetitive, declamatory dialogue, delivered monotonously by a cast who often look on the verge of corpsing. But the ramshackle feel and shrill pitch prove surprisingly entertaining at junctures. "I am not without emotion – I just process it differently," says Evans's enigmatic killer, known only as Driver. His female travelling companion bears a telltale scar and seems decidedly nervous – and once the couple have been ill-advisedly ambushed and held captive by the gang's resident psycho Flynn (Derek Magyar), it becomes clear why. After viciously dispatching a gigantic sentry, Driver hides inside the unlucky man's vast torso to avoid detection. It's the first of several gross-out gags that reveal the fondness for offbeat splatter of director Ryuhei Kitamura (*Versus*, *The Midnight Meat Train*).

Kitamura describes Driver, with his malevolent cunning, physical resourcefulness and pitiless scorn, as a cross between Hannibal Lecter and Jason Bourne. But those franchise linchpins had fulsome backstories, no matter how many



Cabin crew: Adelaide Clemens

films it took for them to be finally unveiled. Evans's man-with-no-name, on the other hand, is more of an empty vessel of violence, like his *noir* namesakes in Walter Hill's *The Driver* (1978) and Nicolas Winding Refn's *Drive* (2011). In the horror realm, a kindred spirit might be Rutger Hauer's John Ryder in *The Hitcher* (1986), similarly a merciless blank with a name suggesting relentless forward motion. "Why are you doing this?" screams one desperate victim. "To keep fit," is the unhelpful response. The film only allows one real concession to Driver's inner psyche: a romantic obsession with Emma (Adelaide Clemens), the sole survivor of a high-profile campus killing spree whom the criminals are aghast to discover locked up in Driver's trailer.

Shot mostly at night in badly lit shacks and murky woodland, Daniel Pearl's Super 16 photography lends the film a fittingly grotty look that's harmonious with the glib, faintly mocking (but non-ironic) tone. Driver becomes more and more of a quasi-supernatural, elemental figure, springing suddenly forth from trees and river beds, while making inventively macabre use of woodchippers, car engines, shower curtains and even clipboards. If it all feels like a nasty shaggy-dog story as it speeds towards an inane anticlimax, it's still one of the more curiously off-kilter horror films to come along recently. **S**

Oblivion

USA/Japan 2013
Director: Joseph Kosinski
Certificate 12A 124m 36s

Reviewed by Henry K. Miller

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

Best considered as a computer simulation or gaming environment, *Oblivion* imagines Earth in the wake of cosmic destruction. The heavens are strewn with lunar debris, the canyons of Manhattan are now actual canyons, and the few remaining humans can live out for real mankind's recurring dream of starting again from nothing. Two of them, Jack (Tom Cruise) and Victoria (Andrea Riseborough), inhabit a space-age eyrie that seems co-designed by John Lautner, Richard Wagner and Apple, miles above the planet's surface, with spectacular views of a world they are about to abandon. Down below, Jack maintains a Walden-esque cabin filled with leather-bound books and classic rock LPs. The film was partly shot in Iceland, and it is a good deal more vivid, and indeed three-dimensional, than, say, *Avatar* (2009).

The story that director and principal writer Joseph Kosinski has decided to unfold against this visually striking backdrop is, however, preposterous. Revealed in portions through the film, in chronological sequence it is as follows: in 2017, Jack and Victoria pilot a spaceship to Saturn's moon Titan; also aboard, but asleep, is Jack's wife Julia (Olga Kurylenko). They encounter an alien ship, the Tet, which tractor-beams in Jack and Victoria just after Jack detaches the sleepers' capsule. The aliens go on to destroy Earth's moon, causing massive earthquakes and tsunamis, and send down whole armies cloned from Jack, which eventually prevail over the natives. The aliens then set about converting the oceans into energy, using rigs that are defended from human survivors by armed drones. These in turn are maintained by more Jack-clones, working in tandem with Victoria-clones, in their bijou pods in the sky. The aliens have made these clones believe that the humans won the war at the cost of making Earth uninhabitable, and that the Tet is not an alien craft but is instead built to take the rest of mankind up to Titan for resettlement once the rigs have done their work.

However, one Jack-clone – our Jack-clone – has inexplicable memories of seeing Julia in New York in the early 21st century, before his birth; and this same Jack-clone, it is noticed by one of the survivors, Malcolm Beech (Morgan Freeman), has literary leanings that set him apart from the other Jack-clones. By Beech's design, it is this special Jack-clone who discovers Julia's capsule when it crashes to Earth, summoned by Beech's beacon.



Zero hour: Tom Cruise

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Harry Knapp
Kami Naghdi
Written by
David Lawrence
Cohen
Director of Photography
Daniel C. Pearl
Edited by
Toby Yates
Production Designer
Jonathan Carlson
Music
Jerome Dillon
Sound Mixer
Erik H. Magnus
Costume Designer
Claire Breaux

©Pathé Productions
Limited and WWE
Studios, Inc.
Production Companies
Pathé and WWE
Studios present a
Milk & Media and
Constance Media
production

Executive Producers
François Ivernel
Cameron McCracken
Michael J. Luisi
Elton Brand
David Lawrence
Cohen

Cast
Luke Evans
Driver
Adelaide Clemens
Emma
Lee Terjesen
Hoag
Laura Ramsey
Betty
Derek Magyar
Flynn
Beau Knapp
Denny
America Olivo
Tamara
Brodus Clay
Ethan
Lindsey Shaw
Amber
Gary Grubbs
Harris

Andrea Frankle
mom
Rob Steinberg
dad

Dolby Digital/
Datasat
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Anchor Bay Films

7,752 ft +0 frames

US, the present. A criminal gang find their plan to rob a home going awry when psychopath Flynn massacres the resident family. Hiding out at a country cabin, the gang cross paths with Driver, a motorist whose nervous companion Betty bears a prominent scar on her midriff. Flynn attempts to intimidate Driver, but is warned off by gang boss Hoag. Later, Flynn forces Driver's car off the road, leaving the couple held captive with Hoag's brother Ethan. Betty abruptly commits suicide, while Driver kills Ethan. The gang discover a young woman, Emma, hidden inside Driver's trailer and recognise her from news reports as the missing survivor of a campus murder spree. Emma, who has an identical scar to Betty's, warns that Driver will kill everybody. Driver dispatches Hoag and his daughter Amber, and badly wounds Amber's boyfriend Denny. Dumping Denny outside a hospital, Flynn, Hoag's girlfriend Tamara and Emma retreat to a motel. A flashback shows Driver forcing an imprisoned Emma to save his life when he inexplicably cuts his own throat. Flynn decides to demand a reward from Emma's family for her safe return. Driver kills Tamara and Flynn, and stabs Emma, retrieving a tracking device from where she is scarred. Driver kills Denny in hospital just as Emma is being admitted.

Olympus Has Fallen

USA 2013
Director: Antoine Fuqua
Certificate 15 119m 31s

Reviewed by Henry K. Miller

Olympus Has Fallen marks the theoretically welcome return of the 'Die Hard on a...' cycle, which (the two recent *Die Hard* sequels notwithstanding) has been mothballed since 1997's *Speed 2: Cruise Control*. The location is the White House, the bad guys are Korean, the hostages include the president, the inside man is ex-presidential bodyguard Mike Banning (Gerard Butler) and his weak spot is the president's son, whom the Koreans intend to torture in order to make his father give up a nuclear code. It is left diplomatically unclear whether the paramilitaries are acting on behalf of the North Korean regime, but their plan has two essential parts: force the US to withdraw from the Korean peninsula and then, using said code, detonate the US nuclear arsenal in its silos.

Though it borrows not only its premise but also numerous incidents from John McTiernan's 1988 action masterpiece, *Olympus Has Fallen* isn't bad because it's plagiaristic; it is bad because it's emptily jingoistic, at once overblown and perfunctory, filled with sadistic violence and yet bloodless. Coming after a string of plodders including *Shooter* (2007) and *Brooklyn's Finest* (2009), this makes director Antoine Fuqua's *Training Day* (2001) look increasingly like a one-off, reliant on Denzel Washington's performance for its energy.

The film's jingoism and leader-worship are all the worse for their insincerity, reaching a kitschy nadir when the bad guys toss a bullet-holed Old Glory from the roof of the White House and it floats slowly down, rendered in ropery CGI, to a massed chorus of 'ahs'. The president is introduced as a family man, kind to his staff, resentful of donors, a global peacemaker who has weaned the US from its dependency on foreign oil, etc. At the end, however, after his ordeal is over, he gives a speech about how it has given the nation a chance to start over and "get back to the best of who we are". The writers are so greedy to hit their emotional marks that the contradiction



The bodyguard: Gerard Butler

between them is simply passed over; we never learn what was wrong before the attack, other than the woeful state of the capital's defences.

Guys both good and bad torture. The Koreans beat their hostages to obtain the code, notably Melissa Leo's defence secretary, who gets a prolonged going-over in a scene made all the more unpleasant by its denouement, in which she surrenders only after being ordered to by the president, on the obnoxious rationale that he will be able to hack it. Banning, our notional hero, also tortures, apparently has no qualms about torture, and indeed boasts about his prowess as a torturer. Even apart from that, he's hard to warm to: when the Koreans send a turncoat US agent to kill his wife, Banning doesn't even bother to phone the police, let alone warn her. (The turncoat's purported motivation is more evidence of the writers' faux-populism: "Globalisation and fuckin' Wall Street".)

Twenty-one years after McTiernan's original, in *Funny People* (2009), Adam Sandler could count on getting a laugh from the line, directed at a blond, long-haired German doctor: "Are you mad that you died at the end of *Die Hard*?" Nothing from *Olympus Has Fallen* sticks in the mind after 21 hours. **S**

Jack and Julia, having settled the question of whether 'their' love can be revived, given that the original Jack is no more, piece together what must have happened. Thus enlightened, Jack agrees to help the survivors nuke the Tet, which he duly does, dying heroically in the process after quoting Macaulay's 'Horatius' from *Lays of Ancient Rome*.

Above this ungainly yet somewhat hidden narrative structure – the plot's creakier hinges are exposed late, or in flashes – *Oblivion* offers a second, more comprehensible and in some ways more satisfying cinematic structure: a thickening pattern of fights, chases, emotional epiphanies, mysterious clues and uncanny events, such as Jack coming face-to-face with himself. But whereas in other hands these familiar elements – clones, simulacra, implanted memories etc – resonate with the ordinary experience of philosophical doubt, in *Oblivion* they merely compound one's disbelief. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Joseph Kosinski Peter Chernin Dylan Clark Barry Levine Duncan Henderson	Stunt Co-ordinator Robert Alonzo	Morgan Freeman Malcolm Beech Olga Kurylenko Julia Rusakova Andrea Riseborough Victoria 'Vika' Olsen Nikolaj Coster-Waldau Sykes Melissa Leo Sally Zoe Bell Kara
Screenplay Karl Gajdusek Michael DeBruyn Based on the graphic novel original story by Joseph Kosinski	Production Companies Universal Pictures presents in association with Relativity Media a Chernin Entertainment, Monolith Pictures, Radical Studios production	Dolby Digital/Datasat/SDDS Colour by DeLuxe [2.35:1]
Director of Photography Claudio Miranda	Editor Richard Francis-Bruce	Distributor Universal Pictures International UK & Eire
Production Designer Darren Gilford	Executive Producers Dave Morrison Jesse Berger Justin Springer	11,214ft + 0 frames
Original Music M83	Cast Tom Cruise Commander Jack Harper	IMAX prints 125m 42s 181,008 ft
Production Sound Mixer Paul Ledford		
Costume Designer Marle Stewart		
Visual Effects Digital Domain Pixomondo Prologue Films		

Earth, 2077. Aliens have destroyed human civilisation. The survivors prepare to depart for Saturn's moon, Titan, aboard a spacecraft, the Tet. Fuel is being extracted from the oceans by rigs; these are defended by drones maintained by Jack and Victoria, who inhabit a pod high above the planet's surface.

A spaceship launched decades before crashes to Earth; survivor Julia, whom Jack revives from hibernation, resembles a woman he has dreamt about. They are captured by a group of humans, led by Malcolm Beech, who want Jack to help them destroy the Tet. Julia reveals that she was his wife, that 60 years earlier they and Victoria were on a mission to Titan to investigate an alien craft – and that it was the Tet.

Victoria mistrusts Julia and alerts the Tet, which orders a drone to kill them; Jack and Julia survive. In a supposedly radioactive zone, Jack finds replicas of himself and Victoria – Beech explains that the aliens cloned the original Jack, but that this Jack is different. Jack travels to the Tet and detonates a nuclear bomb, wiping out the aliens. On Earth, Julia cultivates the land around a cabin Jack had built, raising their child. After three years, Jack's clone finds her.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Antoine Fuqua Gerard Butler Alan Siegel Ed Cathell III Danny Lerner Mark Gill Written by Creighton Rothenberger Katrin Benedikt Director of Photography Conrad W. Hall Film Editor John Refoua	Production Designer Derek R. Hill Music Trevor Morris Sound Mixer Steve C. Aaron Costume Designer Doug Hall Visual Effects Worldwide FX Ghost VFX Base FX Stunt Co-ordinator Keith Woulard	@Olympus Productions, Inc. Production Companies Millennium Films presents a Nu Image, Gerard Butler Alan Siegel Entertainment production Executive Producers Avi Lerner Danny Dimbort Trevor Short Boaz Davidson John Thompson Heidi Jo Markel	Cast Gerard Butler Agent Mike Banning Connor Asher Aaron Eckhart President Benjamin Asher Morgan Freeman Speaker Allan Trumbull Angela Bassett Lynne Jacobs, Secret Service Director Robert Forster General Edward Clegg Cole Hauser Agent Roma Finley Jacobsen Connor Asher Ashley Judd First Lady Margaret Asher Melissa Leo Ruth McMillan, Secretary of Defence Dylan McDermott Forbes Radha Mitchell Leah Banning Rick Yune Kang Yeongsak	Dolby Digital/Datasat In Colour [2.35:1] Part-subtitled Distributor Lionsgate UK 10,756 ft +8 frames
---	---	--	--	--

Washington DC, present day. Korean paramilitaries seize the White House. They take the president and other leading politicians hostage and demand the withdrawal of US forces from the Korean peninsula. During the attack, Mike Banning, formerly on the president's security detail, slips into the White House, evading the paramilitaries' notice.

Banning maintains phone contact with the Pentagon and rescues the president's son; meanwhile the paramilitaries extract from their hostages a multi-part code that will enable them to destroy US

nuclear missiles. After a botched attempt by Navy SEALs to land on the White House roof, the acting president issues the withdrawal order and gives in to the paramilitaries' demand for a helicopter. There is confusion when the helicopter blows up, seemingly with paramilitaries and hostages on board. In fact, the paramilitaries' leader Kang has stayed behind with the president to input the code that will blow up the missiles in their silos, turning the US into a nuclear desert. Banning rescues the president, kills Kang and inputs the countermand code.

Our Children

Belgium/Luxembourg/France/Switzerland 2012
Director: Joachim Lafosse
Certificate 15 111m 1s

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

The drably cosy English title will do Joachim Lafosse's slow-burning psychodrama no favours. (The French title, *A perdre la raison*, at least conveys something of the heroine's helpless desperation.) The film is inspired by the real-life case in a Brussels suburb of Geneviève Lhermitte, who in 2007 stabbed her five young children to death. But rather than simply recreate the Lhermitte case, Lafosse devises his own story, of an attractive, intelligent young woman gradually brought to see herself as worthless, to suggest how she arrives at her 'unthinkable' act of fourfold infanticide.

The theme of a stifling, dangerously dysfunctional family – or quasi-familial set-up – in which the boundaries are disregarded runs through all Lafosse's films to date, a preoccupation he sums up as "excessive love and its consequences, debt, perverse bonds, dysfunctional families, the question of limits... The family is where we learn about democracy and is also the best place to observe dictatorship in action."

Unlike some of his previous work, though – such as the uncomfortably explicit *Private Lessons* (2006) – *Our Children* works through implication and indirection. The exact nature of the original bond between Dr Pinget and his unofficial Moroccan adoptee Mounir (Niels Arestrup and Tahar Rahim, reunited from *A Prophet*) is never stated, though we can deduce it from the jealous outburst of Mounir's brother Samir at Mounir and Murielle's wedding. And Murielle's killing of her children is played out with the utmost discretion: we see her acquiring a knife, then hear her calling them away, one by one, from in front of the TV.

The film's all the more powerful in that, on the face of it, Murielle has scant cause for complaint. She has a handsome young husband, four attractive and well-behaved children, a job she likes and is good at, a benevolent



Mother's day: Emilie Dequenne

quasi-father-in-law who provides her with a large comfortable house, gives her jewellery and dotes on her kids. Yet Lafosse makes clear, through an accumulation of small incidents and petty humiliations, how her situation becomes increasingly claustrophobic, eroding her self-esteem and undermining her sanity.

Emilie Dequenne, who made her debut in the title role of the Dardenne brothers' *Rosetta* (1999), gives a performance of searing intensity, her beauty seeming to drop away as she moves from the light-hearted playfulness of her first infatuation with Mounir to the point at which, as she tells a sympathetic therapist, she feels "walled up", trapped between her sulky, babyish husband and the ultra-controlling Dr Pinget, an act of displaced suicide seeming her only way out. She's well matched by Arestrup and Rahim, replaying their lethally symbiotic relationship from *A Prophet* in more low-key domestic mode. The soundtrack makes rather too much use of plangent choral numbers by Haydn and Alessandro Scarlatti but that apart, *Our Children* is an impressively controlled, emotionally incisive achievement. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Jacques-Henri Bronckart
Olivier Bronckart
Jani Thiltges
Sylvie Pailat
Elena Tatti
Thierry Spicher
Antonino Lombardo
Screenplay
Joachim Lafosse
Matthieu Reynaert
Thomas Bidégain
Director of Photography
Jean-François Hensgens
Film Editor
Sophie Vercruysse
Art Director
Anna Falguères
Sound Recordist
Henri Maikoff
Costumes
Magdalena Labuz

Film, Les Films du Worso, Box Productions, Prime Time, BNP Paribas Fortis Film Fund, RTBF (Télévision Belge), RTS Radio Télévision Suisse – SRG SSR, Unité de production Fiction co-production With the support of Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles and Voo, La Wallonie, Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds, Belgacom, Tax shelter du Gouvernement Fédéral Belge, Inver Invest, O'Brother Distribution With the participation of Fonds National de Soutien à la Production Audiovisuelle du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, Eurimages, Canal+, Ciné+, Films du Losange, Office Fédéral de la Culture (DFI) – Suisse, Fonds Régio Films and Loterie Romande, Filmcoopi, MEDIA

Programme of the European Union
Executive Producer
Gwennaelle Libert

Cast

Niels Arestrup
Dr André Pinget
Tahar Rahim
Mounir
Emilie Dequenne
Murielle
Stéphane Bissot
Françoise
Mounia Raoui
Fatima
Redouane Behache
Samir
Bayla Belal
Rachida
Nathalie Bouteveu
Dr De Clerck

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Peccadillo Pictures Ltd

Belgian/French
theatrical title
A perdre la raison
9,991 ft +8 frames

Present-day Brussels. Schoolteacher Murielle falls in love with Mounir, a young Moroccan immigrant. Mounir has been unofficially adopted by the elderly Dr André Pinget, who has contracted a marriage of convenience with Mounir's older sister Fatima. Mounir fails his medical training, and Dr Pinget persuades him to work as his assistant; he and Murielle will live in the doctor's house. Murielle and Mounir marry, but the ceremony is marred by the jealousy of Mounir's brother Samir, who doesn't have the right to live in Belgium.

Murielle bears three daughters and a son, but feels herself increasingly stifled by her domestic situation. Mounir is dominated by the doctor (who supplies him with prescription drugs) and takes his side in all disputes. When Murielle's sister Françoise pays a visit, Dr Pinget is offended by her brashness and bars her from the house. Mounir suggests that he and Murielle should move to Morocco, but Pinget is furious at the idea and threatens to cut off their funding. Instead he buys the young couple a house outside Brussels, but then moves in with them.

Pinget becomes increasingly possessive of Murielle's children. After she loses her temper with a boy at school, Pinget refers her to a therapist, Dr De Clerck, warning her not to reveal that she lives with her GP; but Murielle accidentally does so and De Clerck terminates the treatment. Pinget organises a marriage of convenience between Samir and Françoise, giving Samir right of residence. Sinking ever deeper into depression, Murielle shoplifts a knife and murders her four children.

Populaire

France/Belgium 2012
Director: Régis Roinsard
Certificate 12A 110m 55s

Reviewed by Sue Harris

The weight of expectation when *Populaire* hit French screens was huge. Boasting one of the biggest feature budgets for a French film in a decade (€15 million), one of the biggest budgets ever for a first film by an untested director (Régis Roinsard), two of the biggest stars in the industry (Romain Duris and Bérénice Bejo) and cameos by veteran actors (Eddy Mitchell and Miu-Miu), this quirky 1950s-set romcom was hotly tipped to succeed. While the box office has been tepid (a respectable but undistinguished €1 million since release in November 2012), the film has pleased French critics, who have raved almost unanimously about the sweet nostalgia that infuses the film, from the feather-light screenplay, to the stylish costumes, to the screwball-style relationship between the main protagonists. Part *My Fair Lady*, part *How to Marry a Millionaire*, part *Rocky*, the film is saturated with references to popular American cinema's many myths of transformation, with the twist here being an ordinary girl's extraordinary mastery of the art of touch typing. Rose Pamphyle (Déborah François) is a woman for whom being a secretary means being 'modern', and whose improbable journey to fame and fortune is both the stuff of fairytales and *The X Factor*, equal parts movie alchemy and dogged 'journey' in the company of her charismatic, adored boss and taskmaster Louis Echard (Duris).

The film certainly succeeds in capturing something of the fascination with speed that was part of the cultural life of the late 1950s, when labour-saving appliances filled the home and record-breaking was the norm as ever-faster cars, planes and trains were developed. Rose's typing skills are treated with the same awed respect: the film clatters with the rapid-fire of mechanical keyboards and heavy return carriages, as her ability to go faster than the machine leads to innovation in the form of new typewriter designs. Rose is, in every sense, a pioneer of modern methods, and the film leaves us in no doubt that she will win both the speed-typing talent show and her man by the final reel.

However, Rose's energy and talents can go only so far in masking the conservatism of the portrait the film draws. This is a pre-*Mad Men* world in



Just her type: Déborah François

which men and women know their place, even if the first tremors of a new order can be felt beneath their feet. What is disconcerting is that the film plays its sexual politics straight: Rose gets the job with Louis because she is more decorative than her older, less well-groomed rivals, and the grown women in the competition typing pool preen like Miss World contestants. The predictability of the scenario is both irritating and disappointing; rehashing every cliché about provincial life, the limits of female ambition, the superior business sense of Americans over the French and the innocence of France in the 1950s, this is a world in which God has clearly not yet created Brigitte Bardot... For a film about modernity, then, it is wilfully old-fashioned, and about as insubstantial as the froth on a cappuccino in one of those new-fangled coffee bars. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Producer Alain Attal	Cinéma, Mars Films, Wild Bunch, Panache Productions, Compagnie Cinématographique, RTBF (Télévision Belge) co-production	Ringuet Nicolas Bedos Gilbert Japy Miou-Miou Madeleine Echarid Eddy Mitchell Georges Echarid Frédéric Pierrot Jean Pamphyle Féodor Atkine André Japy Dominique Raymond Mrs Shorofsky Jeanne Cohendy Françoise Marius Colucci Lucien Echarid
Screenplay Régis Roinsard Daniel Presley Romain Compingt Director of Photography Guillaume Schiffman Editor Laure Gardette Sophie Reine Production Designer Sylvie Olivé Music Rob aka Robin Couderc Emmanuel d'Orlando Sound Pierre Mertens Costume Designer Charlotte David	With the participation of Canal+, Ciné+, France Télévisions, Belgacom In association with Wild Bunch With the support of Eurimages, Région Wallonne	Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1] Subtitles Distributor E1/Momentum 9,982 ft +8 frames
Cast Romain Duris Louis Echarid Déborah François Rose Pamphyle Bérénice Bejo Marie Taylor Shaun Benson Bob Taylor Mélanie Bernier Annie Leprince		
©[TBC] Production Companies A Productions du Trésor, France 3 Cinéma, France 2		

Provincial Normandy, France, 1958. Rose Pamphyle, daughter of a widowed shopkeeper, dreams of escaping her village. She applies for a job in Lisieux as secretary to insurance broker Louis Echarid. Rose charms Louis, on whom she quickly develops a crush, but it soon becomes clear that she is a terrible secretary who only has one real skill: typing at great speed. Louis, a former athlete, decides to train Rose to compete in a regional speed-typing competition, and increasingly becomes obsessed by her potential to be the best in France. His friends Bob and Marie caution him against using Rose to satisfy his own thwarted sporting ambitions, and urge him to acknowledge his growing fondness for her. Louis and Rose make love on the eve of the national championships, but in a moment of doubt he decides that her future will be more promising in the hands of the mercenary Japy family, manufacturers of the 'Populaire' typewriter, and he abandons her without explanation. Rose becomes a role model to a generation of aspiring young women, and is reconciled with her father, who sends her the old typewriter he has always kept in his shop window. However, as she trains for the world championships in New York, she finds little pleasure in her newfound celebrity. After a heart-to-heart with Marie, Louis comes to his senses and he and Bob follow Rose to New York, where they interrupt the championship and Louis declares his love. Rose wins the competition and is crowned world champion speed typist.

Robosapien

USA/Canada 2013
Director: Sean McNamara
Certificate: not submitted 82m

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Inspired by a popular range of robotic toys, this was presumably intended as a poor man's *Transformers*, although its closest models are *D.A.R.Y.L.* (1985) and *Short Circuit* (1986). Indeed, CGI effects aside, it would be easy to believe that this also dates from the mid-80s, especially since there's a mid-point sequence in which the film's robotic protagonist Cody breakdances and moonwalks in front of his 12-year-old protector Henry's delighted science class, followed by a seduction-by-proxy lifted from *Roxanne* (1987) and a vision of militarised Robosapiens with *Terminator*-style glowing red eyes (Cody's are a limpid blue).

In its embrace of every kids-film cliché imaginable (Henry is being raised by a single mother, every set piece has a finger-wagging moral, Cody is designed to be as self-consciously 'cute' as possible, an impending tragedy is signalled by Henry's slow-motion "Nooooo!" followed by an *E.T.*-style death-and-resurrection), it almost gives the impression of having been scripted by its robotic protagonist. A chase through New Orleans adds a dab of colour, but only very undemanding children will get much out of this. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Avi Arad Steven Paul Screenplay Max Botkin Avi Arad Story Avi Arad Based on Robosapien created by WowWee Worldwide Ltd Director of Photography Christian Sebaltd Editor Jeff Canavan Production Designer Steve Arnold Music John Coda Supervising Sound Editor Paul Germann Costume Designer Bernadene Morgan ©[TBC]	Production Companies Crystal Sky Pictures presents in association with Arad Productions, Inc. in partnership with Arc Productions in association with Brookwell McNamara Entertainment a film by Sean McNamara Executive Producers Richard Yanofsky Peter Yanofsky Scott Karol Daniel Diamond Kyla Kraman Jeff Young Cast David Eigenberg Allan Penelope Ann Miller Joanna	Bobby Coleman Henry Holliston Coleman Meagan Joaquim de Almeida Esperanza Jae Head voice of Cody/ Robosapien Kim Coates Porter In Colour Distributor Kaleidoscope Entertainment Not submitted for theatrical classification Video certificate: PG Running time: 82m 14s UK video title: Cody the Robosapien
--	--	--

New Orleans, the present. Inventor Allan Topher works for Kinotech Laboratories. When his search-and-rescue robot is redeveloped for military purposes, he reprograms it to flee at the sight of the Kinotech logo. After one such flight, the robot is found by schoolboy Henry Keller, who names it Cody. Allan tracks Cody down, and falls in love with Henry's mother Joanna. Kinotech head Porter kidnaps Allan and Joanna. Cody, Henry and sister Meagan break into the Kinotech building but are also captured. Cody reprograms the militarised Robosapien army to dance instead of fight. Porter is replaced by Allan as CEO. Cody performs at Henry's school dance.



Scary Movie V

USA 2013
Director: Malcolm D. Lee
Certificate 15 85m 46s

Reviewed by Bethany Rutter

Featuring Charlie Sheen and Lindsay Lohan as themselves, the opening scene of the latest *Scary Movie* is soundtracked by the Benny Hill theme – which is the best possible indication of the impending 'humour'. Instalment five of the indefatigable franchise is a by-the-numbers whistletop tour of horror movies (and whatever else the filmmakers choose to parody) including *Paranormal Activity*, *Mama*, *Evil Dead* and, oddly enough, *Black Swan*, but it delivers few laughs. The script is so poor that it's impossible to see this as anything beyond a moneymaking exercise.

One of the areas where *Scary Movie 5* fails and offends the most is in its laziness. Its makers want laughs merely by gesturing to a celebrity or a moment from zeitgeisty pop culture, but they don't go as far as turning them in to actual jokes. A *Fifty Shades* sequence, for example, is shoehorned into an *Inception* reference (*Inception*, which was released three years ago no less) and is played out with such little acuity and flair that you wonder why they bothered. Even likeable turns from Lohan, Snoop Lion/Dogg and even Ashley Tisdale can't salvage this paper-thin offering, and Usher's cameo is bizarrely pointless.

Though a slim 85 minutes in length and possessing pleasingly slick production values, this frustratingly ill-conceived, badly executed parody drags painfully. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Producers David Zucker Phil Dornfeld Written by David Zucker Based on characters created by Shawn Wayans, Marlon Wayans, Buddy Johnson, Phil Beauman, Jason Friedberg, Aaron Seltzer, Pat Proft Director of Photography Steven Douglas Smith Edited by Sam Seig Production Designer Clark Hunter Music by/Score Produced by James L. Venable Supervising Sound Designers Chris Diebold Chris Terhune Costume Designer Keith Lewis	presents a DZE/ Brad Grey Pictures production Executive Producers Bob Weinstein Harvey Weinstein Matthew Signer Brian Bell Cast Ashley Tisdale Jody Campbell Simon Rex Dan Erica Ash Kendra Brooks Katrina Bowden Natalie Terry Crews Martin Jacobs Heather Locklear Barbara J.P. Manoux Pierre Mac Miller D'Andre Jerry O'Connell Christian Grey Molly Shannon Heather Daltry Snoop Dogg (Calvin Broadus Jr) Ja' Marcus Kate Walsh	Mal Katt Williams Blaine Dolby Digital/DTS Colour by Technicolor [1.85:1] Distributor Entertainment Film Distributors Ltd 7,719 ft +0 frames
---	---	--

US, the present. After Charlie Sheen is killed by a demon-possessed Lindsay Lohan following a sex session, his three small children run away to a cabin in the woods. They turn feral, and when they are found and adopted by Charlie's primatologist brother and his ballet dancer wife, they show signs that they are possessed. Following various strange happenings in the family home, the couple try to find out what's wrong with the children. It is finally confirmed that they are under the influence of an evil demon called Mama, who must be exorcised.

The Stone Roses Made of Stone

Director: Shane Meadows

Reviewed by Carmen Gray

The first documentary by Shane Meadows (whose back catalogue includes gritty Brit realism staples *Dead Man's Shoes* and *This Is England* and music mockumentary *Le Donk & Scor-zay-zee*), *The Stone Roses: Made of Stone* came about after Ian Brown, frontman of Meadows's all-time favourite band, called and asked him to record the iconic group's summer 2012 reunion. Reforming following intense speculation after 16 years, the band's resurrection was hugely meaningful for hordes of diehard fans, and while avoiding sheer hagiography, Meadows makes it his upfront task as one of their devotees to capture the atmosphere of expectation and catharsis.

The opening sequence shows one of three homecoming Roses gigs in Manchester's Heaton Park. The well-known bassline of set-list opener 'I Wanna Be Adored' soundtracks Brown's walk along the crowd frontline; he touches fans' hands before briefly taking someone's iPhone to record the scene – setting us up for a film that's as much about the aura of fan adulation and artistic legacy as the history of the band itself. A voiceover recites Hitchcock's definition of happiness: a "clear horizon" to create. Meadows isn't much concerned with delving into the intricacies of the group's notorious disputes; with no overarching narration, the laconic band are left to speak for themselves, while occasional intertitles note historical events such as Andy Couzens's 1986 departure from the line-up after a disagreement. Footage of their reunion-announcement press conference is featured, Brown and guitarist John Squire having rekindled a broken friendship despite Squire's recent artwork reading: "I have no desire whatsoever to desecrate the grave."

Early photographs (the first Roses gig in 1984 at London's Moonlight Club, for instance) amid shots of old set-lists and flyers add to a sense that the film is another item of band memorabilia. Brown recalls in voiceover how they weren't Mods as lads but went to Northern Soul all-nighters. Time-code readings are used in an attempt to give an unproduced feel to the documentary, which is more loveably shaggy and real at least than the recent Rolling Stones reunion equivalent *Crossfire Hurricane*. The



Game of thorns: Ian Brown

band's legal dispute with manager Gareth Evans after he'd locked them into an outrageously exploitative Silvertone Records contract, which they avenged with a paint attack (covered in the 2004 BBC documentary *Blood on the Turntables*), is cursorily referenced, as is the graffiti campaign they waged against their own city after being cold-shouldered by dominant Factory Records.

Goaded by a television presenter early on about the lack of local affection for the Roses, Brown with characteristic cockiness and dismissive insouciance says: "It takes time for people to get acquainted, to fall in love with you. But it's inevitable." Time proved him right. The most amusing, human scenes record the desperate scramble that erupted when the band made a sudden radio announcement in May 2012 that they were to play a small-capacity gig at Warrington's Parr Hall, with tickets free on a first-come basis to anyone carrying memorabilia. One hopeful relates offering to give away his car in exchange for a ticket, while another dropped everything at the house he was painting, sprinting from the job without locking up. It's a beautiful portrait of the power of treasured memories. Meadows himself appears on camera calling the concert "his Spike Island" – a reference to the legendary Roses gig he regrets missing as a 17-year-old, having taken acid and given his ticket away in the street.

Rehearsal footage is included, with anticipation consummately built up. However, extended concert footage at the expense of background texture leaves the film ultimately feeling slight, with an unnecessarily completist bent as track excerpts are cycled through. Meadows's attempt to diversify reunion-gig footage feels laboured as he mixes sweeping aerial, split-screen, black-and-white and colour takes. Much is made of the drama when drummer Reni refuses an encore and storms out in Amsterdam, though Meadows is kept at a distance ("The last thing anyone wants is a camera stuck in their face," he says), the tension prompting instead a glimpse back at past band ruptures – a case of cohesion weakened and music overshadowed by competing concerns of children and business. The film ends where it began at Heaton Park, monument to a brief circle of creative synchronicity reformed. **S**

Thérèse Desqueyroux

France 2012

Director: Claude Miller

Certificate 12A 110m 12s

Reviewed by Ginette Vincendeau

See feature
on page 52

François Mauriac's 1927 *Thérèse Desqueyroux*, one of the most popular French novels of the 20th century, is, like *Madame Bovary*, the portrait of a deeply alienated woman who rebels

against her conformist background. Mauriac set the story in his native Landes, near Bordeaux, inspired both by the local bourgeoisie he knew well and the case of a woman whose murder trial he attended. His heroine is better educated and less romantic than Flaubert's. Instead of reading romance and committing adultery and suicide, Thérèse makes a bid for freedom by poisoning her husband Bernard. In a happy end of sorts, Bernard is saved and Thérèse is set free: the tribunal drops the case, Bernard forgives her and she moves to Paris. The modernity of the story attracted a New Wave version (directed by Georges Franju) in 1962 with Emmanuelle Riva and Philippe Noiret as the central couple.

Claude Miller's adaptation gives Thérèse a further update by casting Audrey Tautou in the role. Her slim frame, unflinching black eyes, slightly clipped delivery and constant smoking compose a deliberately modern woman, in line with the avant-garde ideas that Thérèse has inherited from her leftwing though equally bourgeois father (Francis Perrin) and from her reading of 'scandalous' books such as those of André Gide. But if her ideas shock her conventional Catholic and rightwing husband Bernard (Gilles Lellouche) and his mother (Catherine Arditi), she is nevertheless an appropriate match socially: the more or less arranged union brings together two large properties covered with pine forest, the region's main crop.

From this contradiction between love of wealth and desire for freedom comes Thérèse's predicament, exacerbated by her disappointment with marriage and, to be more precise, sex. In this respect Miller's adaptation both updates and weakens the novel. Mauriac's era and Catholicism speak in the book through Thérèse's references to revulsion and feeling 'soiled' by sex with Bernard, whereas Tautou gives us a classically bored wife submitting to a clumsy husband. Without access to her interior monologue – the backbone of the novel – the film also makes Thérèse less readable, obscuring further the motivations for her almost fatal gesture. Generations of young women read *Thérèse Desqueyroux* as a proto-feminist tale of a woman oppressed by marriage and then motherhood (as she says, "in my husband's eyes, all that matters is the fruit of my entrails"), but the hard surface of the film's Thérèse makes her less of a victim and more of a mysterious femme fatale. Miller's decision to reverse the novel's structure also works towards greater ambiguity. From the outcome of the trial, Mauriac proceeds backwards in a series of flashbacks. Despite Miller's notion that telling the story in linear fashion "allowed us to feel closer to Thérèse", this produces less empathy with her, especially as he makes Bernard more sympathetic by casting Lellouche, a normally comic actor who brings an endearing simplicity to the part.

Sadly *Thérèse Desqueyroux* was Claude Miller's

Credits and Synopsis

Producer

Mark Herbert

Director of Photography

Laurie Rose

Editors

Matthew Gray

Chris King

Tobias Zaldúa

Sound Recordist

David Mitchell

©[TBC]

Production Companies

Film4 presents

a Warp Films

production

in association with

Big Arty Productions

Executive

Producers

Katherine Butler

Robin Gutch

Alex Marshall

Simon Moran

David Root

With

Ian Brown

Gray Mounfield

John Squire

Alan Wren

In Colour

Distributor

Picturehouse

Entertainment

A documentary following seminal Manchester-born band The Stone Roses as they prepare for their much anticipated summer 2012 reunion tour after a 16-year hiatus. Archive material touching on their early years and bitter disputes mixes with footage of rehearsals and comeback gigs at Warrington's Parr Hall, in Europe and at Manchester's Heaton Park.

Village at the End of the World

United Kingdom/Denmark 2012

Director: Sarah Gavron

Certificate 12A 81m 30s

Reviewed by Isabel Stevens

Like many documentarians sketching remote communities, Sarah Gavron in her opening scenes falls back on that familiar motif from Romantic painting: the sublime spectacle of man swallowed by an epic, inhospitable landscape. Her portrait of one of Greenland's smallest northerly settlements starts with the breathtaking vista of an iceberg towering over the tiny cluster of homes of Niaqornat's 59 residents. An aerial shot encompassing mountains and an endless expanse of icy water confirms the bleak but serene setting of this distant location.

Choosing four very different residents as the focus for her first documentary, *Brick Lane* director Gavron attempts to probe what life is like for this Inuit community as urban centres start to beckon after the closure of the village's main source of income, the halibut factory. Following developments over the course of a year as the residents try to buy the factory as a collective, Gavron's portrait is not all vanishing-world doom, but is in fact unusually hopeful, illustrating that such settlements have a self-sustainable – albeit fragile – future ahead of them.

Certainly she doesn't romanticise life in Niaqornat: from sun-kissed views of washing-lines sporting antlers, animal skins and wellington boots, we are immediately confronted with the daily chores of sewage worker Ilannguaq. Later, with bloody, post-hunt scenes showing a whale and polar-bear carcasses being hauled ashore, cut up and distributed among the residents, Gavron does her utmost to challenge the cuddly, anthropomorphised view of Arctic animal life and show the real face of traditional Greenlandic culture, resolutely keeping her camera on the sorry sight of the whale's foetus on the beach.

Meanwhile the lonely nature of solo teenage life is brought home by 16-year-old Lars, whose dreams of escape are manifested most acutely not when he is being pestered to admit the obvious (that he wants to meet girls and have sex) but when Gavron simply watches him sitting in his bedroom, walking around New York on Google Earth. Forget the images of icebergs that bookend the film; this moment speaks more about isolation – and about 21st-century Inuit life (90 years on from Robert Flaherty), as seen on the web as it on its hunting traditions.

Interviews in Gavron's film largely prove disappointing though. Subjects such as climate change hang in the air – now, we learn, the ice only freezes in March – but are never touched on again. Karl, the chief hunter and mayor who leads the villagers in their quest to buy the factory and who, it's suggested, is Lars's father (but who, in a village of 59, has never spoken to him), is particularly under-examined. The vivid testimonies of Annie, the village's oldest female resident, are the one exception. Her recollections of life with blubber-burning lamps before electricity, or of how as a child the sounds of icebergs creaking at night terrified her, bring some much needed historical contextualisation (though such evocative sonic impressions also have a flipside, highlighting Gavron's unimaginatively twinkling, ambient soundtrack). Given the director's previous female-centred



Cold comfort: 'Village at the End of the World'

dramas, it's also surprising that women's voices are in the minority here, and it's a shame that the position the women occupy in what appears to be a very patriarchal society is never investigated.

While contemporary filmmakers (Ben Rivers, Werner Herzog) tackling remote living on the big screen do so with a defined, idiosyncratic signature, Gavron's approach is rather styleless: a mixture of observation and interviews, with footage rapidly edited together in a way that's reminiscent of the small screen (where she started her career). Occasionally a more meditative moment surfaces – an abstract flurry of snow illuminated against the darkness – but life amid the 24-hour blackout of winter, the most intriguing season, doesn't get nearly enough screen time. Gavron peers into schoolrooms and records village meetings and traditions such as residents welcoming spring together, but Niaqornat's everyday is happening off screen. The spectacle of this remote location is easy to capture, but a community's soul is much harder to fathom. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Co-director
David Katznelson
Producer
Al Morrow
Cinematographer
David Katznelson
Editors
Hugh Williams
Russell Crockett
Jerry Rothwell
Composers
Jonas Colstrup
Max de Wardener
Sound Designer
Bobby Hess

©Met Film
Production Ltd
Production

Companies
Met Films presents
in association with
Made in Copenhagen
and Film4
Produced with the
support of Danish
Film Institute
With the support
of the MEDIA
Programme of the
European Union
NRK - Norsk
Rikskringkasting,
DR - Danmarks Radio
Produced by Met
Film Production Ltd
**Executive
Producers**

Jonny Persey
Stewart Le Maréchal
Jerry Rothwell
David Katznelson

In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Dogwoof

7,335 ft +0 frames

A portrait of the remote Inuit settlement of Niaqornat in north-western Greenland. Filmed over the course of a year, the documentary follows village life, focusing on four inhabitants: Lars, a 16-year-old boy who dreams of a girlfriend and urban life; Karl, the mayor and chief hunter of the village; sewage worker Ilannguaq, the village's newest resident who moved there recently from the south of Greenland; and 79-year-old Annie, the eldest woman in Niaqornat. The way of life of the settlement's 59 citizens is under threat due to the recent closure of their halibut factory. As families start to leave the village, Niaqornat's residents work together to keep the community alive; they welcome tourists from visiting cruise ships and buy the halibut factory, operating it as a collective.

last film, as he died shortly before its release. Although he is better known for thrillers (*Mortelle randonnée*, 1983) and tales of troubled adolescents (*An Impudent Girl*, 1985, *La Petite Voleuse* 1988), Miller's first go at heritage cinema is skilful. Shot on location, the film vividly evokes the flat pine forests, elegant low-lying houses and scorching summer heat familiar to Mauriac readers, and he strikes a rare balance between period detail and naturalism. Similarly, Tautou's outfits are delightfully period and yet do not draw attention to themselves as often happens in the genre. Even if Thérèse's motivations will remain hazy to those who have not read the novel, this is an atmospheric rendition of Mauriac's tale and a fitting epitaph to Miller's career. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Yves Marmion
Screenplay/Adaptation/Dialogue
Natalie Carter
Claude Miller
Based on the novel *Thérèse Desqueyroux* by François Mauriac
Director of Photography
Gérard de Battista
Editor
Véronique Lange
Art Director
Laurence Brenguier
Sound Recordist
Eric Rophé
Costume Designer
Jacqueline Bouchard

©Les films du 24,
UGC Images, TF1
Droits Audiovisuels,
France 3 Cinema,
Cool Industrie
Production Companies
UGC presents a
Les Films du 24
production
A France 3
Cinéma, TF1 Droits
Audiovisuels,
Cool Industrie
co-production
With the
participation of
Canal+, Ciné+,
France Télévisions
In association

with Sofica UGC 1,
Soficinéma 8, La
Banque Postale
Image 5, Cofinova
7, Movies Angels
With the support of
Région Aquitaine
in partnership with
CNC, Procipec,
Département
de la Gironde
Produced by
UGC with the
collaboration of
L'Agence ECLA/
Commission du
Film Aquitaine
Executive Producer
Frédéric Bruneel

Cast

Audrey Tautou
Thérèse
Desqueyroux
Gilles Lellouche
Bernard
Desqueyroux
Anais Demoustier
Anne de la Trave
Catherine Arditi
Madame de la Trave
Isabelle Sadoyan
Aunt Clara
Stanley Weber
Jean Azevedo
Francis Perrin
Monsieur Larroque
Max Morel
Baliote
Françoise Goubert
Baliote

South-west France, the 1920s. Thérèse Larroque grows up in the pine forests of Landes, near Bordeaux. The strong-willed daughter of a bourgeois family, she spends blissful summer holidays with her friend Anne. She marries Anne's brother, Bernard Desqueyroux, as is the wish of both families, but marriage and sex are a major disappointment to her. When Anne falls in love with Jean Azevedo, a local outcast, Bernard and his mother ask Thérèse to break the bond between the pair, which she does. However, the pregnant Thérèse feels increasingly depressed and estranged from her conformist husband and family, including Anne. She has a daughter, Marie. At first accidentally, then deliberately, she poisons Bernard with his heart medicine. He becomes violently ill and Thérèse is found out. To save the reputation of both families, Bernard provides a false testimony and the case against Thérèse is dropped. Thérèse is held captive by the family, forbidden to see her daughter and ostracised by Bernard until he is so shocked by her condition that he sets her free and she moves to Paris.

Home cinema



Fat cats: Daniel Olbrychski in 'The Promised Land'

TRAGICOMEDY OF ERRORS

Examining the folly of human endeavour in their own unique ways, these three Polish films deserve their 'classic' label

POLISH CLASSICS VOLUME 2

ILLUMINATION

Krzysztof Zanussi; Poland 1972; Second Run/Region 2 DVD; 89 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9; Features: new filmed interview with Zanussi, Marcin Latallo's short 'A Trace', booklet

THE PROMISED LAND

Andrzej Wajda; Poland 1974; Second Run/Region 2 DVD; 163 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9; Features: new filmed interview with Wajda, booklet

ESCAPE FROM THE 'LIBERTY' CINEMA

Wojciech Marczewski; Poland 1990; Second Run/Region 2 DVD; 88 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9; Features: new filmed interview with Marczewski, booklet

Reviewed by David Jenkins

If a film could physically cackle at the folly of human endeavour, then the trio of swaggering Polish classics included in Second Run's box-set would be thumping the floor and wiping away the tears. But it would be a laughter dashed with melancholy, as if to suggest that the tumult of

bitter tragedy which befalls the characters in these films is merely the natural state of man, both unavoidable and inexorable. Each film here deals with a specific stripe of the pessimism rainbow, from art (Wojciech Marczewski's *Escape from the 'Liberty' Cinema*, 1990) and commerce (Andrzej Wajda's *The Promised Land*, 1974) through to science (Krzysztof Zanussi's *Illumination*, 1972).

In a supplementary video interview, the 87-year-old Wajda (still tart and combative) talks about how the concept of money never really entered into his cinematic lexicon: people walk into bars, order a drink, then leave. No money changes hands on camera. This may be down to the fact that the cruel machinations of his seminal late-50s trilogy of *A Generation* (1955), *Kanal* (1957) and *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958) were set against the largely currency-free backdrop of World War II. *The Promised Land* works as a grubbily opulent corrective, posing the question: is it possible to attain financial success (dominance, even) within a total moral vacuum?

The film, little known outside mainland Europe, is based on the 1898 novel by Wladyslaw Reymont, which was handed to Wajda by his old Lodz Film School colleague Andrzej Zulawski. It appears that Zulawski handed

Wajda much more than words on a printed page, as *The Promised Land* is exactly the type of phantasmagoric hell-ride with which Zulawski was making his name as a filmmaker. Another of the film's close cinematic antecedents is Marcel L'Herbier's bounding silent epic *L'Argent* (1928), particularly in the way both films capture the gilded parlours of fiscal excess with a camera that seldom pauses for breath. If it stops to think, then all is lost.

At the turn of the 19th century, Lodz became Poland's de facto textile manufacturing base, and its once verdant landscape was soon littered with looming redbrick workhouses. This gave rise to cutthroat financial chicanery, labour exploitation, savage undercutting of competition and widespread corporate sabotage. That the three tinpot fat cats at the centre of *The Promised Land* – Moryc (Wojciech Pszoniak), a Jew, Karol (Daniel Olbrychski), a Pole, and Maks (Andrzej Seweryn), a German – are able to overlook their differences in their rabid pursuit of capital comes across as a richly ironic statement considering how the cultural topography of Europe in the early 20th century was set to landslide.

As ripping a yarn as *The Promised Land* is, with its psychedelic interludes, fish-eye crowd

scenes and occasional dollops of industrial-accident-based splatter, it feels more like a triumph of bristling style over edifying substance. And though the material is leavened by the hair-trigger performances (the ginger-coiffed Pszoniak, who performs with the intensity of an orchestra conductor, is the standout), it's not long before a hefty dose of karmic retribution for the gang's incalculable raft of transgressions seems more like an inevitability than a possibility. And for the climactic gag, Wajda infers that the entire sick process we've just witnessed is simply a single extraneous component within a vast corporate machine.

Regular *Sight & Sound* contributor David Thompson mentions in his exhaustive booklet essay that one of the reasons this movie – which, incidentally, Wajda believed would be his Hollywood calling card – is barely known is that it was instantly deemed anti-Semitic because it was made in Poland. He also notes that while the film does contain quasi-caricatured Jewish business leaders, which some might deem problematic, there's no sense that Wajda is singling out any one race or religion as being more devious or ethically corrupt than the other. In the realm of capitalism, evil is all-inclusive.

The machine of government bureaucracy is coolly dismantled in Wojciech Marczewski's meta-cinematic comedy *Escape from the 'Liberty' Cinema*, in which a Lodz fleapit has to cancel all screenings when the actors in a lightweight matinee go on strike in the middle of a projection. To explain this queer phenomenon to government lackeys, members of the board of censorship and a preening local film critic (complete with indoor scarf and drama-queen gesticulations), the shambling hero (Janusz Gajos, credited as 'Cenzor') screens a key passage from Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), another film about the logistical bother caused by fourth-wall-shattering movie actors.

Set during the dying years of the communist era, Marczewski's jocular satire scolds the concept of artistic censorship. It bemoans the fact that it's not just a process through which seditious and combustible material is excised from public view, but one whose strictures promote premeditated self-censorship whereby artists feel that, for the sake of ease, they should avoid playing too fast and loose with the rules. The director also takes aim at a culture that's been swaddled in red tape, with much of the film's humour (managing to be at once specialised and inclusive) deriving from government officials attempting to rationalise this freak occurrence with local distribution models and bureaucratic buck-passing. And with *Daybreak*, the sentient melodrama that refuses to end, Marczewski offers a wry archetype of the sappy and bland popular entertainments filling Polish cinemas throughout the 1980s.

The film's central snafu takes up much of the running time, and the comic motif of officials having to deal with a situation that is far beyond their intellectual comprehension recalls Milos Forman's similarly sardonic *The Firemen's Ball* (1967). Yet it's the equally eccentric scenes of



'Escape from the Liberty Cinema'

redemption that prevent the film being dismissed as a single-joke novelty. Gajos is eventually transported to the roof of the cinema, where he finds all the lost and abandoned characters he has cut out of movies. He interacts with them and is eventually made to feel sorry for what he has done. It's the point at which the tone of the film changes from arch, angry and disbelieving to rueful, reflective and bittersweet.

The Promised Land and *Escape from the 'Liberty' Cinema* are fascinating and necessary rediscoveries from Marczewski and Wajda, but they both pale next to Krzysztof Zanussi's astounding cerebral odyssey *Illumination*. Questioning nothing less than the fabric of the known universe, the limits of human knowledge, the immutability of death and the potential for spiritual salvation, Zanussi's film deals in the kind of acute, mellifluous philosophical orations that

Krzysztof Zanussi's astounding cerebral odyssey 'Illumination' questions nothing less than the fabric of the known universe



'Illumination'

have made Terrence Malick's most recent work so stimulating and mysterious.

At its centre is Stanislaw Latallo's goggle-eyed Franciszek, a gangly student (first in physics, then biology) whom we accompany through a period of intense existential anxiety and auto-critique. He sees his first dead body following a mountain-climbing accident; he marvels at the complexities of the human brain during surgery; he visits a far-flung shrine in search of more poetic forms of enlightenment; he has a child with his girlfriend and is unable to shift his feeling that the arduousness of simply being will be automatically passed down the bloodline. Alongside the poetic prognosticating, it's extremely refreshing to see a screen scientist who isn't either a paragon of contented logic or totally insane. It's also refreshing to see a character in search of life's meaning who is slovenly, awkward and mumbles much of his dialogue.

Despite the film's frisky elliptical timeframe, Zanussi is always methodical in the way he builds the drama. He employs title cards and still images (often scientific diagrams or quotations from textbooks) to contextualise Franciszek's journey, reminding us that great scholars have trodden this path many times before and have written of their adventures. *Illumination* also offers a sublime showcase for the great Polish cinematographer Edward Klosinski, who went on to work with both Wajda and Kieslowski. Every edit feels immaculately judged, and every shot is framed and executed in a way that manages to be incredibly precise yet also graceful and lyrical. All three of these titles deserve the epithet of 'classic', but this one does so in spectacular fashion.

Each film, sourced from brand new restored transfers, comes with a video interview with its director. The newly commissioned booklet essays, by David Thompson, Michal Oleszczyk and Michael Brooke respectively, are of the highest quality, with special mention going to Brooke's encyclopedic knowledge of Poland's censorship board. 📺

New releases

ARMY OF SHADOWS

Jean-Pierre Melville; France/Italy 1969; StudioCanal/Region B Blu-ray; Certificate 12; 145 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: documentary, booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Long-planned and intensely personal dream projects often sour in the eventual realisation – Scorsese's *Gangs of New York* (2002) and Wajda's *Katyn* (2007) aren't bad, but they languish in the foothills of their creators' distinguished careers. The original French reactions to Jean-Pierre Melville's antepenultimate feature, of which *Cahiers du cinéma*'s dismissive "the first and greatest example of Gaullist film art" was typical (Charles de Gaulle, still alive at the time, was less than popular with the 1968 generation), suggest that the same transpired in this case, but although its rehabilitation as one of Melville's very best films took some considerable time (it didn't open in the UK until 1978, and its US premiere was delayed until 2006), it's now largely complete.

Far from offering a familiar celebration of conventional French Resistance heroics, Melville drew heavily on his own personal experience to focus on the appalling moral choices that underground fighters all too frequently had to make, whether taking a split-second decision to abandon a daring rescue attempt (thus condemning a man to certain death but ensuring that three of his comrades evade capture), embarking on a humanitarian suicide mission under cover of being thought a turncoat, or killing colleagues in cold blood, either as a punishment or a merciful deliverance. While individual set pieces are as superficially stylish and suspenseful as anything in the bookending *Le Samourai* or *Le Cercle rouge*, they're much more morally knotted here: there's no modish samurai code underpinning them, merely a grimly pervasive realisation of intensely fragile mortality. Gerbier (Lino Ventura, matchless) may regularly change coats and facial hair to avoid detection, but there's no hiding the pain behind his eyes.

Disc: "Colour easily becomes vulgar, if you're not careful," said cinematographer Pierre Lhomme, but his supervision of the restoration that fuels this release has ensured the retention of the original film's muted, almost monochrome palette. The high-definition picture is particularly good at resolving the more crepuscular moments that have challenged previous DVD releases. Sadly, the extras from previous BFI and Criterion

releases have been dropped, but Dominique Mailliet's hefty three-part documentary has plenty of strengths of its own, especially when covering the often stormy relationship between Melville and his collaborators on either side of the camera.

BADLANDS

Terrence Malick; USA 1973; Criterion Collection/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 94 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: documentary, interviews with producer Ed Pressman and editor Billy Weber, episode of 'American Justice'; booklet by Michael Almereyda

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Released when its writer-director was just 30, *Badlands*, a tale of savage innocents set in 1959, is one of the more *sui generis* debuts in the history of American pictures. And while Terrence Malick has since abjured conventional dialogue in hammering out his own prismatic, kinetic, choreographed filmmaking language, *Badlands* offers proof that, when he wanted to be, he was an idiosyncratically funny screenwriter with a fantastic ear for American vernacular.

"I'll give you a dollar to eat this collie," is the first line spoken on screen in the film – garbageman Kit Carruthers is talking to his slovenly co-worker, examining a dead dog left out with the trash. A preening, pigeon-toed peckerwood who scrupulously maintains his James Dean pompadour in preparation for his anticipated close-up, Kit will shortly uproot his 15-year-old girlfriend Holly and lead her on a killing spree across South Dakota beginning and ending according to arbitrary, incomprehensible whims. The pair are played by Martin Sheen and Sissy Spacek, the latter with the colouration of a faded photograph; both are in their first feature leads, a small miracle of casting serendipity.

The mystery of motivation is source of much of the film's humour; Kit is forever slyly smiling at unspoken inside jokes, exhibiting a little boy's self-dramatising pleasure in making a game out of life, inventing and discarding signals, codes and pacts, finding vital importance in the detritus of civilisation while caring nothing for life and death. It's Spacek, however, whose monologue of etiolated clichés soundtracks the movie, never quite jibing comfortably with what's on screen. And even for those of us who admire Malick's further explorations into the human enigma through cinematographic means, it's hard not to regret the loss of the author of lines like, "He said that if the piano didn't keep me off the streets, maybe the clarinet would."

Disc: The famously private Malick is absent from the extras, though cast and crew offer a portrait of the supremely self-assured young director, in thrall to the whims of the Colorado light. Freshly restored, the film has never looked more rhapsodic.

BILLY LIAR

John Schlesinger; UK 1963; StudioCanal/Region 2 DVD; Certificate PG; 95 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1; Features: interviews with Tom Courtenay, Helen Fraser, Richard Ayoade and Bob Stanley, featurette on the Keith Waterhouse archive at the British Library, trailer, stills gallery

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Fifty years after its release, John Schlesinger's nimble adaptation of Keith Waterhouse's

breakthrough novel still feels the most modern of the crop of early-60s British New Wave dramas. Fresh and irreverent, darkly funny and tellingly sad, the film is as protean as Tom Courtenay's fickle fabulist Billy, seen leaping from Churchillian bombast to animal howls when preparing to be carpeted by Leonard Rossiter's contemptuous boss. Courtenay, chosen because he was 'daintier' and more boyish than his fellow stage-Billy Albert Finney, is less an Angry Young Man than an angsty one, his mobile features dancing with dread at every imminent disgrace, yet unable to suppress his relentless, self-destructive mockery of authority.

That's just one example of the assault the film wages on the old by the new, the wrecking ball that swings behind Julie Christie's freewheeling Liz signalling the arrival of supermarkets, pre-marital sex (Billy's two-timing 'wrangle for the ring' is positively Larkin-worthy) and social mobility. Fearlessly fluid as it slips from sharp-eyed social observation into its hero's grandiose fantasy life, the film can shock, as when Billy wheels seamlessly from shaving to daydreaming of machine-gunning his nagging family. As a character study it's both sympathetic to Billy's plight yet pitiless in anatomising it.

Where other kitchen-sink heroes are trounced by shotgun weddings or social expectations (Schlesinger's earlier *A Kind of Loving* shows this with characteristic warmth and honesty), Billy is clearly as trapped by his fears and fantasies as he is by his everyday life, which packs the busy CinemaScope frame with city bustle. Watchful to the last rather than judgemental (mother Mona Washbourne left in trembling isolation, Billy's final knife-edge failure of nerve), it's a film that is as compassionate about life as it is amused by it. **Disc:** Bradford shimmers in the transfer's pearly monochrome, crisply detailed from steamy coffee bar to inky suburban night. Courtenay looks back in anecdote and without anger in his interview ("Had I been in France making *Billy Le menteur*, I'd have been a movie star"). Unexpectedly, the standout extra is British Library curator Zoe Wilcox combing through Waterhouse's archive to reveal how very closely he based *Billy Liar* on his own youthful habits.

CAPTURED

John Krish; UK 1959; BFI Flipside/Region 0 Blu-ray and DVD Dual Format; Certificate 15; 62 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: 'Sewing Machine', 'H.M.P.', 'The Finishing Line', 'Shooting the Message'; interview with Krish, essay booklet.

Reviewed by Kate Stables

"This film is RESTRICTED," blares an arresting card at the start of John Krish's 1959 Army Kinema Corporation military training film. Krish had hoped that this dark, expertly composed dramatised documentary on resisting interrogation techniques would be his overdue calling card for features, but ironically his portrayal of the harsh treatment that POWs could expect was so effective (it was closely based on the real experiences of British POWs in the Korean War) that only relevant service personnel could see it for the next 41 years.

Recreating North Korea in a Surrey field and corraling the actors in realistically tiny huts ("It kept them usefully upset"), Krish



Going underground: 'Army of Shadows'

IN TIMES OF UPHEAVAL, EH?

Kawashima Yuzo's raucous brothel-set comedy is laced with sly references to the social turmoil of post-war Japan

BAKUMATSU TAIYO-DEN

Kawashima Yuzo; Japan 1957; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD; Certificate 12; 110 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: booklet

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

Kawashima Yuzo died in 1963, at the age of 45, of muscular dystrophy aggravated by heavy drinking, but he still managed to direct 45 features in 19 years – of which *Bakumatsu taiyo-den*, voted fifth best Japanese film of all time in a 1999 *Kinema Junpo* poll, is probably the best known, if as yet only in Japan.

The title takes some explaining. Literally, it means 'A Sun-Tribe Myth from the Bakumatsu Era'. The term 'sun-tribe' refers to the post-war urban juvenile delinquents known as *taiyo-zoku*, as depicted in the stories of rightwing ideologue Ishihara Shintaro. Serialised in newspapers and magazines, Ishihara's lurid stories gave rise to a batch of films released in the summer months of 1956 – one of them, *Punishment Room* (*Shokei no heya*), directed by Ichikawa Kon. Further stoking the moral panic whipped up by Ishihara's stories, the films were accused of encouraging antisocial behaviour among youngsters (as was *Rock Around the Clock*, released in the West that same year), and the studios agreed to produce no more of them.

The title of Kawashima's film, then, released the following year, carries an element of snook-cocking, as if a story in the banned mode had been lightly disguised by pushing its setting back a hundred years. The *Bakumatsu* ('end of the curtain') era refers to the dying years of the 250-year Tokugawa shogunate, which, weakened by the forced opening-up of Japan by the US and European powers, finally gave way to the restoration of the Meiji emperor in 1868; and an introductory voiceover locates the action to 1862. In fact, despite its teasing title, *Bakumatsu taiyo-den* doesn't have much to do with juvenile delinquency; most of the time it plays out like a raunchier Japanese version of *The Barber of Seville* crossed with a Feydeau farce. But sly references to the social turmoil of post-war Japan abound, and in particular to the status of prostitutes.

As the voiceover introduction reminds us, for 350 years the Shinagawa district, where the action takes place, was the prime red-light area of Edo (as Tokyo used to be known). After a rousing pre-title opening in which two mounted, pistol-waving foreigners are furiously pursued down a crowded period street, the title sequence slips briefly into a drab modern-day scene of roads and railways where Shinagawa has dwindled into "a nondescript alley", distinguished only by its "16 'licensed cafés' employing 91 hostesses of an average age of 34". This figure, it seems, represents a sad comedown from past glories,



Man about the house: Frankie Sakai in Kawashima Yuzo's 'Bakumatsu taiyo-den'

and even these paltry numbers will soon be further diminished since, we're told, in a year's time prostitution will be made illegal and the venerable red-light district will cease to exist.

But from there we're bounced back to the lively tumult of 1862 when, even though "business was slow", Shinagawa boasted a hundred brothels and a thousand hostesses, all competing for clients. The action takes place in and around "the once famous Sagami Inn", kicking off with the arrival of a rowdy bunch of clients, led by Saheiji Inokori (played by the popular comedian Frankie Sakai), demanding the best of everything – food, drink, hostesses and geishas. The next morning, though, Saheiji's friends have all vanished and he has no money to pay for the night's entertainment – so he offers to stay on at the brothel, working off his debt by turning his hand to whatever needs to be done.

There's scarcely any plot as such. Kawashima sets his camera roaming and prowling through the multilevel set of the Sagami Inn, while we witness interactions between the infinitely resourceful Saheiji and various inmates and

clients: the rival prima-donna prostitutes, Osome and Koharu; the madam's son, Tokusaburo, who falls in love with Ohisa, a servant sold into prostitution by her drunkard father; an incompetent policeman; a provincial governor; a lecherous, acne-scarred bookseller; and most notably a group of self-styled 'nationalist' samurai led by the historical figure Takasugi Shinsaku (played by Ishihara Yujiro with something of the cool arrogance of the young Marlon Brando), who plan to attack the Foreign Quarter. In all these encounters, the Figaro-like Saheiji (with his cheerful catchphrase, "In times of upheaval, eh?") invariably comes off best.

Kawashima, according to Ad Blankenstijn on his Japan Navigator site, is "perhaps the greatest unknown in the West of all Japanese film directors I can think of, and one who least deserves it". *Bakumatsu* was much admired by Kurosawa Akira, whose *Yojimbo* (1961) is set in the same precarious transitional period and who shared Kawashima's liking for the horizontal wipe. The film's co-screenwriter, Imamura Shohei, shortly to embark on his own directorial career, already shows his relish for the sleazy underbelly of Japanese life.

Flawlessly restored by Nikkatsu in its original 1.37:1 ratio, this is another visually impressive release from Eureka's Masters of Cinema series. The booklet includes a touching but clear-eyed tribute to Kawashima from Imamura. 🍷

Most of the time it plays out like a raunchier version of 'The Barber of Seville' crossed with a Feydeau farce

New releases

paints an unvarnished picture of the 're-education', brutality and torture meted out to camp newcomer Intelligence Officer Daniels (Alan Dobie) – so traumatising the film's ex-POW technical adviser that he quit the project. Torch bulbs flare in terrifying close-up, and the film's lessons slam home via Daniels's gritted-teeth internal monologue: "Each time proves how wrong they are," he hisses during a disturbing waterboarding sequence. James Piers Taylor's excellent contextualising essay points out how the same evergreen torture techniques pop up in *Zero Dark Thirty*, and ponders the role of films like *Captured* in the development of today's controversial military interrogation methods.

Showing off Krish's genius for taking a sideways, mordant look at a conventional brief, this release also features some punchy 70s pieces, though none can boast *Captured*'s intensity. For diehard hairy Krishners, his worthy but wearily earnest prison-service recruiter *H.M.P.* (1976), heavy with pontificating screws, will illuminate the director's move to an observational style. Most effective, though, are those public-safety films where death stalks off-camera – in the deadpan massacre of children holding their sports day on the railway track in *The Finishing Line*, or the unattended child straying agonisingly under a car in *Sewing Machine*. No wonder, as Krish admits cheerfully, his fatality-packed 'fillers' earned him the soubriquet 'Dr Death'.

Disc: A career-spanning interview with Krish gives a vivid account of shooting *Captured* – including his performing the water torture "because no one else would do it".

CHRISTINE

John Carpenter; USA 1983; Twilight Time/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 110 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1; Features: isolated score track, commentary by Carpenter and actor Keith Gordon, deleted and alternate scenes, 'Fast and Furious', 'Finish Line', 'Ignition'

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

It's a fact that the cybernetic symbiosis which results in getting behind the wheel of the right (or wrong) vehicle can fundamentally alter someone's personality – get into a lorry driver's cabin sometime and see how raw, road-hog superiority suffuses it.

From this very simple fact Stephen King built a very simple horror fable, *Christine*. It's about a shy teenager, Arnie, who acquires a beater of a red-and-white 1958 Plymouth Fury named Christine and, on fixing her up, becomes someone else entirely. That ominous 'Fury' is very apt, for Christine infests the mind of her owner – not only does Arnie gain a new swagger (and a new wardrobe freely incorporating leather vests), he also becomes possessed of a new will to power, a desire to revenge himself on all the 'shitters' who'd crossed him before. This he can do with impunity, for Christine's body and chassis can regenerate after she's crushed a pedestrian – a miracle of writhing chrome accomplished with reverse-motion photography in John Carpenter's film from King's novel, starring weedy, pencil-necked Keith Gordon as Arnie.

Both baby boomers, King and Carpenter were just old enough to remember pining after a mint Plymouth like Christine – and the film

is full of 1950s pop, harking back to America's golden age of the suburban teenager while looking unstintingly at the social hell of high school. Carpenter even evokes the stairwell confrontation from Nicholas Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), replete with Arnie in blazing red jacket, but a friend might've gotten closer to the point when likening *Christine* to Ray's *Bigger Than Life* (1956). Like James Mason's bland family-man-turned-charismatic-fascist in that film, Arnie, under the influence of his beloved car, develops an undeniable satanic magnetism. Arnie's girl and his erstwhile best friend finally put a stop to his hit-and-run rampage, but her "God, I hate rock 'n' roll" signifies this as a triumph of the bland. We'll miss our beautiful beast.

Disc: The revving engine under the opening credits is enough to prompt an awed "Oh my God".

DRACULA

Dario Argento; Italy 2012; Sony/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; 100 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1;

Features: interviews with cast and crew, music video

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Though blessed (or cursed) with a third-dimensional gimmick, Dario Argento's second mounting of a gothic horror classic – after his peculiar 1998 take on *The Phantom of the Opera* – is surprisingly one of the more small-scale adaptations of Bram Stoker's novel.

Argento and several credited co-writers borrow heavily from Jimmy Sangster's tailored-to-a-tiny-budget script for Hammer's 1958 *Dracula*, notably the notion that Jonathan Harker (Unax Ugalde) is summoned to Castle Dracula to catalogue the Count's library rather than expedite his emigration to far-off (and expensive) Victorian England. Again, the action is confined to Middle Europe, though no country is specified for the

shot-in-Italy location, and most of the characters conveniently live in the shadow of the castle. This prompts one reasonably interesting innovation in that *Dracula* (Thomas Kretschmann, in a costume very like Louis Jourdan's in the BBC's 1977 *Count Dracula*) has entered into a pact with the corrupt worthies of the town, endowing schools and limiting his predations on condition he is not defied; the best horror sequence comes when he contemptuously avenges himself on these treacherous minions.

Like Hammer, Argento cuts costs by reducing *Dracula*'s harem from three to one – indeed, the buxom Tania (Miriam Giovanelli) is a lift, even down to the character name, from Anouska Hempel's vampire hoyden in the little-liked Hammer sequel *Scars of Dracula* (1970). The other new wrinkle, adapted especially for 3D, is that this Count can manifest as all manner of vermin, including an owl, a cloud of flies and an alarming (and female) giant praying mantis.

A pallid Asia Argento is a surprisingly subdued Lucy, upstaged by Giovanelli when she turns into a vampire, while Marta Gastini is a tagalong Mina, yet again a reincarnation of *Dracula*'s lost love but barely present in the film. Getting round the problem of Van Helsing's customary dodgy Dutch accent, Argento cannily casts Rutger Hauer – the first Dutchman ever given the role – but the promise of a face-off between Kretschmann's Count and Hauer's professor fizzles in a climax that is heavy on CGI but light on drama. The dialogue is often high-flown but clunky ("I am nothing but an out-of-tune chord in the divine symphony," laments *Dracula*) and there's a sense that Argento – who has not, to put it mildly, been on a winning streak lately – is hampered rather than liberated by 3D. Lesser Argento, lesser *Dracula* – but major mantis.



Christine Full of 1950s pop, the film harks back to America's golden age of the suburban teenager while looking unstintingly at the social hell of high school

Disc: There are separate Italian releases on Blu-ray and DVD, with two different Blu-rays, one offering a 3D as well as a 2D option, the other just 2D. Audio is offered in English and Italian, with optional subtitles in French.

EVIL DEAD II

Sam Raimi; USA 1987; StudioCanal/Region B Blu-ray; Certificate 15; 84 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: commentary, documentaries, photo galleries, trailer

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Sam Raimi always intended his original *The Evil Dead* (1981) to be read as a black comedy (in interviews at the time, he regularly cited the Three Stooges as key influences on its splatstick violence), but in Britain the Director of Public Prosecutions disagreed and stuck it on the 'video nasties' list – normally a badge of considerable honour for a lot of the grubbily disreputable dreck that it singled out, but much less so in this case. There was never any chance of such revisionism with the sequel, which is an absolute (and entirely intentional) hoot from beginning to end. Prior familiarity with the first film isn't required, as it begins with a scaled-down precis, after which much of what transpires rests on the shoulders of Ash (Bruce Campbell), perhaps the most grievously abused leading man in all live-action cinema.

From his debut more than 30 years ago to this year's *Oz the Great and Powerful*, Raimi has always been a proudly paid-up member of Orson Welles's electric-train-set school of filmmaking, and it's hard to think of a pre-CGI camera trick or special effect (optical, mechanical, makeup, stop-motion) that isn't pressed into service at some point. As Ash's discovery of the Necronomicon Ex-Mortis (or Book of the Dead) unleashes all manner of demonic forces, represented both on screen and by a headlong subjective camera, it's easy to believe that the cackling which frequently breaks out on the soundtrack consists of inadvertently recorded reactions from the production team, both at the latest indignity they've heaped on their hapless hero and at their own ingenuity in realising it. The fact that the joins are all too visible adds to the fun: the film is as ramshackle as a condemned fairground ride.

Disc: The film's plethora of old-fashioned optical effects and superimpositions means that even a high-definition transfer will never be impeccably pin-sharp, but this looks as good as could reasonably be expected, and the soundtracks (original cinema and show-off surround remix) are wonderfully full-throated. A cabin-load of extras includes a lively, anecdote-packed commentary by Raimi, Campbell, co-writer Scott Spiegel and makeup artist Greg Nicotero recycled from numerous previous releases (but none the worse for that).

THE FURY

Brian De Palma; USA 1978; Twilight Time/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 118 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: isolated score track, theatrical trailer

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Or, as it is known in some circles, 'the movie where Brian De Palma blew up John Cassavetes'. Released in 1978, two years after De Palma had his first real box-office success with *Carrie*, *The Fury*



Kooky Cukor: 'Love Among the Ruins'

was another story of a teenager with pubescent psychic powers – powers that could pose a grave threat to the world around her. In fact, there are two such adolescents here – Gillian (Amy Irving) is recruited to the Paragon Clinic for young telepaths in Chicago, where she has visions of a boy with abilities like her own, Robin (Andrew Stevens). She's finally recruited to help search for Robin by his father, Peter, an ex-government agent, played by an oft-shirtless Kirk Douglas. Peter has been double-crossed by old comrade Ben (Cassavetes), who is using Paragon to recruit and exploit young telekinetics for government use. In order to get information on Robin's whereabouts, Peter has started sleeping with a nurse at Paragon (Carrie Snodgrass, channelling Irene Dunne), whom he has recruited to play double-agent.

Douglas's granite-hewn federal-eagle face is laughably incongruous when he's canoodling with Snodgrass in the back of a VW van, but it's hard to shake the scenes of Stevens, effectively imprisoned in the golden cage of his posh digs, tangling with age-inappropriate government-issue girlfriend Fiona Lewis. If ever a movie toed the line between narrative preposterousness and viable tragedy, it's this gory generation-gap skirmish, which makes 'sense' mostly as a thematic and stylistic exercise, a summing up for De Palma's career to date. It's an experiment that indicates greater things ahead while, it must be admitted, not adding a great deal itself. Nevertheless, De Palma's shooting around the city of Chicago as freely as though it were a backlot is thrilling, and complements the film's images of creeping surveillance: all the world's a soundstage. Throughout, Cassavetes has that slightly sardonic expression that he doesn't bother to hide when performing in material he regards as inferior, which often comes across quite effectively as absolute corruption (see also: *Rosemary's Baby*). As for the much discussed climax, I cannot think of a more liberating anti-authoritarian blast outside of Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point* (1970) – which *The Fury* must join in the great directors' films *maudits* hall of fame.

Disc: Some grain present throughout, though Gillian's slo-mo escape from Paragon in broad daylight is now very evident as one of De Palma's finest set pieces. Did I mention that John Cassavetes blows up in it?

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

George Cukor; USA 1975; Echo Bridge Home Entertainment/Region 1 DVD; 100 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1

Reviewed by Peter Tonguette

George Cukor's award-winning TV movie has slipped on to DVD as part of *British Cinema Collection: 8 Acclaimed Films*, a cheaply priced bundle from Echo Bridge. (Alas, the company has done the film an unintended favour by ignominiously packaging it with such woeful titles as *Rowing with the Wind* and *School for Seduction*: a fresh look at *Love Among the Ruins* reveals that it only looks sprightly next to such dross.)

The trouble starts with James Costigan's far-fetched teleplay. Laurence Olivier plays barrister Sir Arthur Glanville-Jones, who has been privately infatuated with actress Jessica Medlicott (Katharine Hepburn) for the past 40-odd years. In their twenties, the two had an ardent affair which, despite lasting for all of three days, was so memorable for Arthur that he never wed after being spurned by Jessica, who went on to marry a rich man of property, now deceased. They come into contact again after Jessica is sued by her would-be second husband (Leigh Lawson), whom she left at the altar. She now requires Arthur's representation, but disavows any recollection of their decades-old romance. This makes Arthur seem faintly ridiculous: how could the so-called "finest barrister in the Empire" have taken Jessica's adolescent promises (that she wanted nothing more than to be his wife, that she wanted to die before him, etc) seriously?

It is bad enough that Costigan's script requires Olivier to race around like a man possessed in anticipation of his meeting with Jessica – worrying that his office is dusty, vainly studying himself in the mirror – but Cukor's direction makes matters worse. When Arthur stands at his office window and watches Jessica exit her car, the camera zooms in on Olivier's face. He mumbles to himself, grandiloquently, "There she is, there she is," as John Barry's sickening score swells. In case we missed the point, moments later, when Arthur hears the murmur of Jessica's voice from an adjoining room, Cukor repeats the shot. The director's unusually emphatic approach (totally lacking the subtlety of, say, *The Philadelphia Story* or *Holiday*) contributes to the film's unseemly lack of proportion. When Jessica convincingly speaks of the sorrow she feels over the death of her husband, Arthur self-pityingly interjects, "I know the pain of being left behind," as though losing a spouse is the same thing as simply being dumped.

Disc: The print is muddy-looking and stuffy-sounding.

THE MASTER

Paul Thomas Anderson; USA 2012; Entertainment in Video/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 137 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1 (DVD anamorphic); Features: production featurette, deleted scenes, trailers, documentary ('Let There Be Light')

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Driven obsessives and social outsiders have long been core ingredients of Paul Thomas Anderson's cinema, but the pairing of Joaquin Phoenix's war veteran Freddie Quell and Philip Seymour Hoffman's distinctly



BLACK-AND-WHITE AND RED ALL OVER

Ken Loach's sincere and often powerful documentary portrait of post-war Britain divides critics and sympathisers alike

THE SPIRIT OF '45

Ken Loach; UK 2013; Dogwoof/Region 2 DVD; Certificate E; 92 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9; Features: interview with Ken Loach, 22 extended interviews, Loach short film 'Which Side Are You On?'

Reviewed by Patrick Russell

The DVD release of *The Spirit of '45* preceded Margaret Thatcher's funeral by two days. The foregoing fortnight's national navel-gazing was predicated on the presumption, spanning the political spectrum, that Thatcher single-handedly shattered the 'Spirit of '45' that Loach so single-mindedly hymns – substituting for it the shriller 'Spirit of '79' that haunts us to this day.

Preceding Thatcher's demise, the successful cinema release of Loach's film divided reviewers: not, it's vital to stress, on precisely parallel political lines. Most admirers were political sympathisers; not all sympathisers were admirers... DVD allows a closer look – *The Spirit of '45* is better analysed than either idolised or despised.

Loach's political mission is met by two main components: 'interview' and 'archive' – an approach more often associated with television than with cinema. Stylistically, it resembles schools TV programmes of the Thatcher era. Nowt wrong with that: classroom filmmaking is a noble calling, unjustly overlooked – hence it rarely gets name directors, decent budgets, generous running times, commercial release or S&S reviews. The first factor having enabled the other four, Loach must be held to high standards.

Crucially, 'interview' generates most of the political meaning; 'archive' tends merely to illustrate. Six hours of DVD extras are here devoted to interview rushes rather than uncut archive films. Costs of licensing entire titles (as opposed to extracts) may have contributed to this choice, but it's indicative of intent and effect. So is the fact that Academy-ratio productions were reversioned to widescreen, cutting off the tops and bottoms. Commercial factors regarding ease of cinema distribution may again have contributed to this decision – but it begs the question of whether Loach has not only visually but also ideologically 'reframed' his source materials.

Certainly he shows little curiosity for the context of his primary sources (not merely mirrors of their age but themselves artefacts of culture and history) or the meanings they held for their makers and original viewers. Newsreel title-cards aside, he tends not to label them. Researcher Jim Anderson has supplied him with content spanning several categories of filmmaking: newsreel (centre-leftish Pathe and Tory-connected Movietone alike), state-sponsored film, 16mm amateur production and a rather random-



The way we were

seeming cache of 1960s hindsight-interviews. Shots from liberal-reformist Documentary Film Movement pictures *Housing Problems* and *Today We Live* are familiar from many decades' use as instant ciphers for the Depression. Others are startlingly less well known – the public booing of Churchill is a well-documented historical phenomenon, but the footage recording it is rarely seen. A DVD interview with Anderson might helpfully have elucidated his and his director's priorities and methodology. It might also have helped viewers find their way to the rich heritage of films (many easily available on DVD or online) from which they've drawn.

This is a film about society, not film itself. It would be unreasonable to expect the critical engagement with archive found in the work of an Adam Curtis, say. But DVD viewers, no less than ticket-buyers, are, for example, left none the wiser that 1945 was a crucial, confusing juncture not only for society but for the whole

The elision that most exercised the film's detractors was Loach's chronological and political 'jump cut' from 1945 to 1979



Street party: rejoicing in the streets at the end of World War II

huge sector of non-fiction filmmakers whose work Loach quotes. For instance, the fact that the aforementioned documentary movement was at its most politically thrusting under Tory-led interwar and wartime government, then quickly frustrated by the limited opportunities afforded by the Attlee administration (understandably prioritising the implementation of social democracy over the patronage of creatives). Hard-edged social-democrat 'film argument' by Paul Rotha is briefly extracted by Loach, alongside more conventional source material. Financially and culturally, a filmmaker like Rotha found limited room for manoeuvre after 1945. More pragmatic compatriots were (cheerfully or wearily) subsumed into Butskellite consensus along with the newsreel producers.

This observation takes us to the elision that most exercised this film's detractors. Namely, Loach's chronological and political 'jump cut' from 1945 to 1979, affording Thatcher the status (ironically, precisely the one her champions also award her) of *deus ex machina*, entering stage right to shatter the collectivist Spirit of '45 and revive that of Victorian capitalism. Such Manichaeism strangely excludes the possibility – a promising one for today's left to pursue – that the Spirit of '79 has now reached roughly the same stage of its life-cycle that the Spirit of '45 had shortly prior to Thatcher's ascent: a headless chicken, dead but not knowing it, longing for paradigm-challenging leadership.

Loach has consistently decried 'BBC' notions of 'neutrality' and 'balance'. The issue is not whether he has a position but whether his filmmaking advances it. It's great that this sincere, fitfully powerful film is out there to trigger debate, even if not to make a subtle contribution to it. Equally, it's clear (and he may well agree) that Loach perceives monochrome archive film in black-and-white, rather than as a complex continuum of shifting shades of grey. 📺

New releases

Wellesian guru Lancaster Dodd is the most perfectly complementary that he's devised to date. A mid-point prison interlude captures their contrasting personas: in a single shot that frames both their adjoining cells, Quell rages like a wounded animal, kicking the toilet bowl until it shatters and pounding his head on the underside of the bunk, while Dodd is the epitome of disconcertingly calm certitude.

We never do get completely to grips with the self-improving 'Cause' that Dodd is promoting – he calls himself "a writer, a doctor, a nuclear physicist and a theoretical philosopher", but whether that CV includes 'visionary' and 'charlatan' (or both) is left open. Indeed, whether Quell believes it himself or is merely using Dodd's movement as a psychological crutch remains tantalisingly moot – in a career-best turn that (deliberately?) stirs up memories of his faked breakdown in 2010, Phoenix so convincingly evokes the psyche of an individual damaged both externally (war trauma) and internally (alcohol laced with industrial solvents) that it recalls Pauline Kael's famous recollection of seeing Brando on stage in the 1940s, when she initially thought the actor was having an actual seizure.

There's no actorly vanity in Phoenix's performance, which leaves all the more for Hoffman, who visibly relishes every vocal grace-note of his orotund oratory – but although he dominates large-scale gatherings with a charisma that rivets the attention even when surrounded by naked women, Dodd seems reliant on Quell (despite his associates finding him repellent) in ways that neither seems able to articulate. Their double act would be compelling enough even if shot Dogme-style, but it's the hyperrealistic evocation of the turn of the 1950s that imbues the film with the great-American-novel feel that Anderson was clearly striving for.

Disc: A mere Blu-ray can't hope to resolve the fine detail of the original 65mm negative, but by any normal yardstick the transfer looks and sounds superb. The most welcome extra is *Let There Be Light*, John Huston's once controversial 1946 documentary about the rehabilitation of WWII veterans, one of the films (the other being Lionel Rogosin's *On the Bowery*, 1956) that Anderson screened for Phoenix during early rehearsals.

A NEW LEAF

Elaine May; USA 1971; Olive Films/Region-free
Blu-ray; 102 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1

Reviewed by David Thompson

Elaine May's wonderful off-centre comedy has been hard to find for too long, so this Blu-ray release from the enterprising Olive Films is very welcome, even if it arrives with no extras. It was May's directorial debut after she'd found fame as one half of the brilliant improvisational double-act she formed with Mike Nichols in 1957.

After going their separate ways in the mid-1960s, Nichols became a hot young film director with *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1966) and *The Graduate* (1967), while May focused on writing for the theatre and cinema. This was appropriate given that, according to Nichols, his focus in their comic scenarios was always on the shape of the piece, while the crazy ideas just flowed from May at an unstoppable pace.



Troubled waters: 'A New Leaf'

While Nichols became a consummate movie professional, May's approach to filmmaking proved to be more anarchic. *A New Leaf* was followed by *The Heartbreak Kid* (from a Neil Simon script), and though both were warmly received, neither fared well at the box office. Her subsequent movies *Mike & Nicky* (1976) and *Ishtar* (1987) went hugely over budget and became notorious commercial and critical disasters. Yet her work has largely stood the test of time, and *A New Leaf* – for many – is still a supremely funny film.

Walter Matthau is at his most inscrutable as Henry Graham, a wealthy New York bachelor who one day discovers that his inheritance has evaporated and he is penniless. Faced with giving up his gilded life of Ferraris and polo, Henry is advised by his all-wise butler to marry an heiress. After encountering several impossible candidates, he chances upon the hyper-gauche botanist Henrietta Lowell, played with endearing clumsiness by May herself. After satisfying his financial needs, Henry plans to bump off this unnecessary appendage to his life, yet somehow finds himself drawn to the hopelessly unaware Henrietta. Matthau is brilliant at playing hardball and is, as ever, a master of deadpan put-downs and threats: when Henrietta apologises for being so much trouble, after Henry has patiently aided in her (expertly choreographed) struggle to wear a nightgown correctly, he resignedly replies, "It's alright, it's not for long."

The story goes that after spending double her budget and editing for ten months, May was forced to hand over her cut of three hours to Paramount, who reduced it to 102 minutes. She failed to have her name removed from the result, yet *A New Leaf* functions beautifully in its reduced state. Scene follows scene without undue fuss or flab, the casualness of the direction and the relaxed performances ensuring no excess of sentiment in what is essentially a 'warm' black comedy. Even Pauline Kael in her otherwise negative review of the film remarked that "somehow – and this may be a feminine contribution – there is a sweetness about its absence of style, about its shapeless, limp comic scenes." What the studio excised were two murders at the hands of Henry that would have definitely pushed the film into darker territory. But it seems the 'director's cut' will never be seen. And arguably *A New Leaf* is a better film for that.

Disc: A decent transfer, though visual and sonic perfection were clearly not priorities in this production.

ROUNABOUT: A YEAR IN COLOUR, 1963

UK 1963; BFI/Region 0 DVD; Certificate E;
99 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1

Reviewed by Sukhdev Sandhu

Roundabout (subtitled 'People – Places – Events') was a cine-magazine – that posh cousin of the newsreel – produced by the British government's Central Office of Information for the delectation of Commonwealth audiences in the early 1960s. Its monthly editions represent an invisible – unknown, even – archive that projected a view of the country as kinetic and can-do, a design and industrial powerhouse. A certain kind of academic would damn them as postcolonial propaganda, fictions that talk up Britain's economic importance at the very moment when it was going into steep decline, but in their time they were as much a part of the nation's global visual footprint as The Beatles or the James Bond films.

Shot in gleaming Technicolor, pepped up by jazzy soundtracks and narrated by a cheerfully boss-class Englishman with a fondness for the adjective 'vigorous', each ten-minute film deploys an almost dreamlike narrative structure that essays a poetics of transnational capitalism: a typical episode moves from the creation of a New Zealand motor-racing track and then back to the UK, where production of the Mini is in full swing; a reference to the cars' tyres is the cue for a trip to South East Asia, whose accomplishments in monetising rubber-tapping segues into a celebration of rubber-clad Aqua-lung marine divers.

Reportage and vox pops are almost non-existent. Awkward political questions – around the rush for oil in Brunei, for example, or the relationship between modern architectural projects in Indonesia and Sukarnan authoritarianism – are avoided. But there is fascinating footage of the friends of the wife of the Indonesian ambassador in London, as well as other well-to-do, cat's-eye-spectacle-wearing diasporas living in the capital. It's unusual to hear such irony-free praise for plastic and its varieties of form and colour. And the gleeful rundown of successful construction – of stands at Ascot, of Windsor town centre – is in stark contrast to the griping that accompanies public debates about building schemes these days.

Disc: Fine transfers; booklet.

SCANNERS TRILOGY

SCANNERS

David Cronenberg; Canada 1981; Second Sight/
Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 18;
103 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1

SCANNERS II: THE NEW BREED

Christian Duguay; Canada 1991; Second Sight/Region B
Blu-ray; Certificate 18; 103 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1

SCANNERS III: THE TAKEOVER

Christian Duguay; Canada 1991; Second Sight/Region B
Blu-ray; Certificate 18; 101 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Though David Cronenberg has retained his independence throughout his career, he has regrettably become an adaptor of novels rather than stuck to his own vision. *Scanners* (1981) is untidy in a way that *A Dangerous*

New releases



Mind (2011) or *Cosmopolis* (2012) are not, but somehow the way the movie bristles with more ideas than it can contain – just as scanner heads buzz with so much activity they sometimes explode – makes it a more resonant, satisfying work. The two cheaper sequels, directed by Christian Duguay in the early 1990s, aren't as sophisticated in character interplay or intellectual ambition, but there is space for them because the first film creates a world that suggests so much more going on around the edges of its story than it has time to explore.

The premise is that a thalidomide-like drug administered to pregnant women in the 1940s has produced a generation of unstable psychics who have variously been marginalised by their superpowers – which seem like a handicap – and by the high-level conspiracies of sinister plotters. While the ambiguous mad scientist (an impressively bearded Patrick McGoochan) who created the breed tries to direct their evolution, a struggle plays out between Stephen Lack's mild-mannered good son and Michael Ironside's head-exploding megalomaniac. The film is remembered as 'the one with the exploding head' – an effect even more effective in Hi Def – but it has much more going for it, including great conventional action (a van crashes into a music store, freezing the film in its precise point in time thanks to the album covers), bizarre and very Canadian supporting characters like the artist who lives inside a huge replica of his own head, a psychic meltdown over a phone modem and the vein-popping, eye-bursting, identity-melting scanner-duel climax. The sequels are disposable, with plots built around variations on the original's effects – but they're competent footnotes.

Disc: Welcome *Scanners*-specific interviews but an odd absence of trailers, alternate footage (Cronenberg reckoned the heart attack he shot to substitute for the exploding head for TV was even more upsetting) and the two *Scanner Cop* movies.

THE SEA GULL

Sidney Lumet; USA 1968; Warner Archive/Region-free NTSC DVD; 141 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1

Reviewed by David Thompson

In spite of their continuing popularity in the theatre, Chekhov's plays haven't proved to be fertile ground for the cinema. Only *Uncle Vanya* has benefited from two beguiling big-screen adaptations, one directed by Andrei Konchalovsky (1971), which is now hard to find, and the other by Louis Malle, his swansong *Vanya on 42nd Street* (1994), from a translation by David Mamet. Other than the version under review, I have been able to trace three other films made from *The Seagull*: one evidently based on a 1975 Broadway production featuring Frank Langella and Blythe Danner; the Russian *Chayka* (1972) directed by Yuli Karasik with Lyudmila Saveleva (Natasha in Bondarchuk's *War and Peace*); and Marco Bellochio's *Il gabbiano* (1977), with Laura Betti. With only a distant memory of the latter, and not having seen the others, I can't make direct comparisons with Sidney Lumet's film, except to say that I believe all three have in common a strong fidelity to Chekhov's setting and text.

The Seagull famously depicts a set of bourgeois characters mostly in love with the wrong



All together now: 'Valley of Song'

person. Konstantin, an aspiring playwright, is the son of a celebrated actress, Irina. Irina's lover, the successful writer Trigorin, becomes the object of obsession for Nina, who craves a career in the theatre and in turn is deeply loved by Konstantin. The action, as in so many of Chekhov's plays, takes place at a country house, in this instance by a lake. Lumet found his ideal location in Sweden, and Gerry Fisher's restrained camerawork underlines the sultry atmosphere of the place. The lighting is gentle, the focus on the soft side. Takes are long and close-ups are rare. Very little of the text is cut, and the original four-act structure honoured. Chekhov called his play a 'comedy', but the tendency here is very much towards the melancholic. In sum, Lumet neither cheats on his source material nor presents any extraordinary insights that couldn't have been enjoyed in the theatre.

What makes this version memorable is the casting of Vanessa Redgrave as Nina. Her vibrancy and intensity (particularly in her famous final scene) are totally absorbing. David Warner is also fine as Konstantin, and James Mason is a suitably suave Trigorin, if looking too old for the part – Chekhov's text keeps reminding us of the exact ages of the characters, and the effect here is definitely jarring. The weakest link is Simone Signoret as Irina; her thick French accent and blousy demeanour ill fit the character, and nothing interesting is made of this choice (a doubly strange one given that her brother is played by Harry Andrews!). While there are many positive aspects to this production, it's a shame that the need for box-office names distracts from some genuinely fine acting by the younger members of the cast.

Disc: An OK print, but one that doesn't seem to do full justice to the cinematography.

SECOND-HAND HEARTS

Hal Ashby; USA 1981; Warner Archive/Region 1 DVD; 98 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.78:1

Reviewed by Peter Tonguette

"I have not got a friend in the world," says Christopher Tietjens in Ford Madox Ford's 1925 novel *No More Parades* – but Hal Ashby's 'recession romance' *Second-Hand Hearts* proves that terminal friendlessness is hardly unique to the aristocracy. The lead characters are not only destitute and desperate, but are seemingly living off the grid. As the film opens, loutish Loyal Muke (Robert Blake) is about to be fired from a job at a car wash, while Dinette Dusty (Barbara Harris), who sings at a rundown bar when she is not "waitin' and

cashier outin'", has not seen her three children since the death of her husband. Dinette craftily tricks Loyal into marrying her so that she can retrieve them from her father-in-law Voyd (Bert Remsen), but so bleak are their prospects that Loyal barely resists the arrangement, which he has agreed to in a state of drunkenness.

The newlyweds can't even count on kindness from what little kith and kin they have. They travel from El Paso, Texas, to neighbouring New Lizard (cinematographer Haskell Wexler vividly captures the American south-west) to pick up Dinette's kids from Voyd, and though the old man benignly gives his blessing to the marriage in order to be rid of them, he lies about selling his diner instead of letting Loyal and Dinette run it. Yet can you blame him for not wanting anything to do with these two? When they are on the road together they make for an entertaining pair, but Ashby's careful editing choices eventually put their outlandish behaviour in context. As Dinette speaks metaphorically of "the bluebird of happiness" and Loyal belches with a six-pack of beer under his arm, the film holds on close-ups of young Human (Collin Boone), Iota (Amber Rose Gold) and Sandra Dee (Jessica and Erica Stansbury), who look anything but amused. Yet these children are stoic, not complaining when they are waylaid on the side of a desert road after a tyre goes flat. The film is less a tribute to the indomitable spirit of Dinette than to that of the children.

Nonetheless, we can't help but root for Loyal and Dinette's marriage because the alternative is just too bleak. Dinette is perpetually terrified that Loyal will ditch them as they head to California, and when he leaves to get gas after they've run out, she falls to her knees in the middle of the dark, lonely road, begging him to come back. The almost religious power of the moment is heightened when a flash of lightning brightens the horizon – a marvellous unplanned touch. Throughout, Wexler's camera is inquisitive, focusing on Harris's hand as Dinette recounts, in comically graphic detail, an accident she had involving a pair of scissors. Near the end, though, Ashby again returns to Human's point of view when the youngster observes Loyal and Dinette's arms becoming intertwined as they walk contentedly through a roadside pet shop. Is it so bad that they have no one else to count on? Marriage was created, the Book of Common Prayer says, "that the one ought to have of the other", and in that spirit we are glad that Loyal has Dinette. Nominally a comedy, *Second-Hand Hearts* has its share of hilarious lines – "All they had was nine cents, a little lard and me," says Shirley Stoler of her impoverished parents – but Ashby's more solemn sentiments stay with us.

Disc: A fine-looking transfer, no extras.

DIE VERRUFENEN: DER FÜNFTE STAND/DIE UNEHELICHEN (1926)

Gerhardt Lamprecht; Germany 1925/26; Edition

Filmmuseum/Region 2 DVD; 113/96

minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1

Reviewed by Bryony Dixon

Gerhardt Lamprecht's Berlin films were inspired by the great cartoonist and photographer Heinrich Zille, who documented the *Milljöh*

of working-class life in Berlin. The great man even endorses *Die Verrufenen* by signing the credit sequence and appearing in the film himself – we see him in his studio drawing a cartoon which dissolves into the opening scene. This association places us immediately in the territory of the social-conscience film – this is one of many fine works dealing with chronic poverty and social ills in Weimar Berlin.

Die Verrufenen roughly translates as ‘the discredited’ – in the US it was titled, more spectacularly, *Slums of Berlin*, but it seems never to have been released in Britain, which may explain the lack of an English title on Edition Filmmuseum’s austere DVD packaging. The film’s subtitle, ‘the fifth estate’, is more revealing – an intertitle explains: “Misery, poverty, vice and alcohol turn people into what’s called the fifth estate, the people who can’t escape their fate. A world of its own which we attack rather than fix.” Dropped into this milieu is an engineer named Robert Kramer, just released from prison and played by the granite-faced Bernard Goetzke. Shut out by society, Kramer can find no work; rather than descend into this fifth estate through exploitation and alcoholism, he decides to end it all, but is rescued by Emma, a prostitute who takes him in. Ultimately he has the capacity to drag himself out of the poverty trap by his education and talent, but for the other characters no escape is possible.

In *Die Unehelichen* (“The Illegitimate”), Lamprecht similarly tackles maltreatment of illegitimate children not so much by the authorities, which are shown as sympathetic and competent (if overwhelmed), but by society’s moral codes and by uncaring exploitative individuals. Beautifully made, using all the sophistication of 1920s German filmmaking

style, both works give a convincing flavour of life for the Berlin underclass in a more apolitical way than the harder-hitting *Mother Krause’s Trip to Happiness* made a few years later (which we would also love to see on DVD).

Disc: Restoration and mastering are impeccable, as always with the Edition Filmmuseum label.

WARRIORS OF THE STEPPE – MYN BALA

Akan Satayev; Kazakhstan 2011; 101 Films/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; Aspect Ratio 16:9

Reviewed by Geoffrey Macnab

Akan Satayev’s 2012 Kazakhstan Oscar contender is in similar vein to other period epics shot on the Steppes, among them *Mongol* and *Nomad*. Astonishing features of horsemanship and expertly choreographed battle scenes are combined with a clunky, nationalistic plotline. The main character here is the young Luke Skywalker-like warrior Sartai (Assylkhan Tolepov), who leads his countrymen in a defiant insurgency against the invading Dzungars, descendants of Genghis Khan.

The film, set in the 18th century but with a medieval feel about it, is very picturesque indeed. Director Satayev makes loving use of the landscapes – the vast plains with snow-tipped mountains in the background – and excels at staging elaborate action set pieces. The storytelling, however, is portentous and formulaic, and attempts at introducing a romantic subplot are undermined by very trite dialogue (“Love can never be measured by sufferings... Whatever happens you will always be in my heart.”) The horses here are the real stars – some of the stunts make the work of Yakima Canutt in old John Ford movies look positively leaden-footed.

Disc: No extras.

WELSH CLASSICS

LAST DAYS OF DOLWYN

Russell Lloyd and Emlyn Williams; UK 1949; Studio Canal/Region 2 DVD; Certificate PG; 91 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1

VALLEY OF SONG

Gilbert Gunn; UK 1953; StudioCanal/Region 2; Certificate PG; 71 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1

Reviewed by Geoffrey Macnab

Some formidable Welsh talent is assembled in the rousing, Ealing-style *Last Days of Dolwyn*, a yarn about the flooding of the Welsh village of Dolwyn late in the 19th century. In particular, it’s fascinating to see Richard Burton in one of his very first film appearances – he has his usual mercurial screen presence but is less overbearing than in later roles, when he began to trade so heavily on his voice. When we first see him, he has just returned home from Liverpool and speaks in awe about the big city: “You’ve got no idea what they are like, those big places. In Liverpool, they got houses with seven windows, one on top of the other... fog all day long, nothing green and all the people strangers to each other.”

The film starts very effectively with Rob (Emlyn Williams) returning to the village after many years away. It seems completely deserted, but that’s because everyone is in church, listening to a hellfire sermon in Welsh. The screenplay, by Williams, celebrates the eccentricity and foibles of the villagers in a way that’s reminiscent of Dylan Thomas’s *Under Milk Wood*. But Williams is also broaching some much darker themes: class tension, rivalry between the English and the Welsh, the cynical attempt to ‘clear’ the village to make profit for the landowners. Williams’s character is the villain: having left the village in disgrace many years before after stealing the collection money from the chapel, he has reinvented himself as a dapper ‘metropolitan’. Now he’s working for Lord Lancashire’s water company, which wants to flood the village – something that will make him rich and enable him to avenge himself on the community that rejected him. The film is full of lively scene-stealing character turns from the likes of Hugh Griffith (the furrow-browed Minister) and Edith Evans (not as a haughty aristocrat but as Burton’s kindly and sensitive foster mum).

Gilbert Gunn’s *Valley of Song*, an adaptation of Cliff Gordon’s play, begins in similar fashion to *Last Days of Dolwyn*. This too is a story about a man returning to his home village after time away in the big city, but it’s a much gentler affair, in which the tensions are all to do with the choir.

As its title hints, the film is full of song. Geraint Llewellyn (Clifford Evans) is the man back in Wales after five years away in London. His problems begin when he agrees to become the chapel’s choirmaster and gear up the community for a performance of Handel’s *Messiah*. His choice of soloists causes long-simmering tensions and rivalries to boil over. It’s a flimsy conceit around which to build a feature, with none of the political subtext found in, say, Mark Herman’s *Brassed Off* (1996), though the sweetness of the singing is contrasted with the caustic nature of the gossip and backbiting – “all over a bit of old singing”. Look out for a very short (and restrained) cameo from a youthful Kenneth Williams.

Disc: No extras.



Scanners The movie bristles with ideas... It’s remembered as ‘the one with the exploding head’ but it has much more going for it than that

Television

ANGELS – SERIES 1

BBC; UK 1975; Simply Home Entertainment/Region 2
DVD; 746 minutes; Aspect Ratio 4:3; Certificate 12

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

With the NHS again top of the political agenda, there is more than just nostalgia value in revisiting this popular show created by Paula Milne. Like *The Bill*, this comparatively 'warts and all' drama was initially screened in an hour-long slot before being successfully redeveloped into a twice-weekly soap. The opening episode introduces upper-crust Fiona Fullerton and poor Irish farm girl Erin Geraghty as trainees at St Angela's Hospital, later expanding to include other staff and students. We see the nurses learn such mundane tasks as making beds and washing patients' hair in often excruciating detail – though this can work well, as in 'Appraisal', an episode in which the eponymous showdown between Julie Dawn Cole's big-hearted but undisciplined second-year nurse and her supervisor is played across a quarter of an hour in real time.

Disc: The episodes provided for review offered above-average picture quality and sound.

GHOSTWATCH: BEHIND THE CURTAINS

Rich Lawden; UK 2012; Lawman Productions/
Region 0 DVD; Certificate Exempt; 90 minutes;
Aspect Ratio 16:9; Features: teaser trailer

Reviewed by Simon McCallum

On Halloween night 1992, the BBC broadcast *Ghostwatch*, a 90-minute drama structured around a supposedly live outside broadcast from a haunted North London house. Toying with established and nascent television tropes and fronted by established TV personalities, the programme provoked intense press controversy with its disturbing, seemingly real-time investigation of a family plagued by a malevolent spirit nicknamed 'Pipes'. Despite attracting an audience of 11 million, *Ghostwatch* has yet to receive a repeat broadcast and was unavailable until the BFI's 2002 DVD release. Rich Lawden's independent documentary *Ghostwatch: Behind the Curtains* attempts to definitively chronicle its conception, production and reception, and its influence on a generation of budding writers and filmmakers.

Lawden's passion for *Ghostwatch* is shared by many of its younger viewers, drawn back in adulthood by its chilling allure. While not an experienced filmmaker, he scores an impressive coup in securing interviews with all the key players, including writer Stephen Volk, director Lesley Manning, producer Ruth Baumgarten and Richard Broke, executive producer of the *Screen One* drama slot – the 'rules' of which *Ghostwatch* overturned. Manning has even come on board as Lawden's producer and editor. We're also treated to contributions from 'cast' members Michael Parkinson, Craig Charles, Mike Smith and Sarah Greene (proving there is life after Mr Pipes's glory hole).

Of the myriad anecdotes offered, perhaps the most compelling concern BBC executives' extraordinary reaction to the media fuss and the subsequent suppression of *Ghostwatch*, evoking the fate of Peter Watkins's nuclear docudrama *The War Game* two decades earlier. "To just leap to



Ghostwatch: Behind the Curtains The programme provoked controversy with its seemingly real-time investigation of a family plagued by a malevolent spirit

fear and outrage is fascinating" comments actor Andy Nyman of the more hysterical viewers' willingness to be duped. Kim Newman is also on hand, recalling that *Sight & Sound* commissioned a review – then a rare honour for a TV drama.

Aside from footage of a 20th-anniversary screening at Birmingham's Electric Cinema, talking heads dominate the film. Some neat animated interludes contribute a degree of atmosphere, but the absence of extracts from *Ghostwatch* itself (presumably for rights reasons) is a major hindrance, excluding unfamiliar viewers and amplifying the indulgent running time. One for hardcore 'Ghostwatchers' perhaps, but a worthwhile enterprise. After all, as Newman concludes, "What else did the BBC put out that month that anybody remembers?"

Disc: The only extra is a teaser trailer.

PERLASCA: THE COURAGE OF A JUST MAN

Rai Fiction/France 2/Hamster Productions/Focus Film;
Italy 2002; Odyssey/Region 2; Certificate 15; 196
minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9 anamorphic

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

In decades past the Italian film industry had a well-earned reputation as a supplier of low-budget imitations of box-office hits, so this release might easily be dismissed as just an attempt to trade on the success of *Schindler's List* (1993). While both tell true-life stories of businessmen who helped

Jews to escape from the Holocaust, this large-scale television production made on location in Hungary has several virtues of its own, most notably a general avoidance of grandstanding on the nobility of the downtrodden, insisting instead on the essence and detail of survival under truly barbaric oppression. It also offers a beguiling central performance from Luca Zingaretti, an actor of impeccable leftwing credentials who here is utterly convincing as the politically conservative Giorgio Perlasca. A volunteer in both Abyssinia and the Spanish Civil War, Perlasca eventually turned his back on fascism. Trapped in Budapest during the siege of 1944, he used credentials issued to him for his service in the Civil War to gain diplomatic status with the Spanish embassy and then bluff his way into saving the lives of more than 5,000 men, women and children. Mathilda May, still best known as the intergalactic bloodsucker in Tobe Hooper's 1985 film *Lifeforce*, proves to be just as decorous here as a sympathetic countess, and much more convincing, while György Cserhalmi is hissably perfect as their Nazi nemesis. While overlong and occasionally overstated, this talky drama makes for stirring viewing and keeps the distressing scenes of carnage to an absolute minimum, even at the end, when many of Perlasca's refugees are caught and brutally executed.

Disc: The anamorphic transfer is first-rate, but there are no extras.

GHOST IN THE MACHINE

The eerie atmospherics of Nigel Kneale's 1970s TV horror *The Stone Tape* paved the way for films like *Berberian Sound Studio*

THE STONE TAPE

BBC; UK 1972; 101 Films/Region 0 DVD; 90 minutes; Certificate PG; Aspect Ratio 4:3; Features: commentary with Nigel Kneale and Kim Newman

Reviewed by Rob Young

As soon as the men arrive with crowbars and jemmies, hacking off wooden panelling to reveal a steep stone staircase, you know that Nigel Kneale must have a hand in this. For Kneale, dark forces were always unleashed by some form of digging or excavation. The ancient alien spacecraft lying dormant for millions of years, unearthed in *Quatermass and the Pit* (1967), is one instance of his Escher-like view of history and superstition, where one forgotten civilisation's futuristic invention can subtly haunt another whose science may be sophisticated but whose memory is short. So his teleplays, which have come to define a certain strain in British television infused with weirdness and creeping horror, are often about the abscess that forgetting can engender in the mind, and the horrors that swell to fill it.

Frequently cited by 'hauntological' musicians such as those associated with the Ghost Box label, *The Stone Tape* is a clear reference point for a film like Peter Strickland's *Berberian Sound Studio* (2012): both fill their screens with analogue sound equipment and Dymo-labelled oscilloscopes. It was transmitted on Christmas Day 1972, which places it slap within a period of paranoid techno-thrillers that includes Coppola's *The Conversation* and the BBC's *Doomwatch*.

Ryan Electric Products have just acquired an old Victorian mansion, Taskerlands, to use as a laboratory for secret, progressive projects. (The location was Horsley Towers, former residence of computer pioneer Ada Lovelace.) The team, led by Peter Brock (Michael Bryant), arrive in high spirits, with plenty of laddish boisterousness. Jill Greeley (Jane Asher), though, almost gets crushed between two trucks on her first day – an event that leaves her shaken and foreshadows a larger, looming tragedy. After a blazing pep-talk by Brock exhorting his department to discover 'the big one' – a new recording medium to give the company a competitive edge over Japanese rivals – the team are shown a dungeon-like room whose uncanny atmosphere spooked the restorers. Much of the action takes place in this black hole, as the team act on Brock's hunch that the stones themselves have captured the sound of a traumatic historical event. Believing that ghosts are "a mass of data waiting for the correct interpretation", he alternately cajoles and thrashes them onwards, while himself under pressure from a faceless superior.

A Kneale signature is the juxtaposition of individual trauma and chills within earshot of



Sounds of the 70s: Michael Bryant as Peter Brock in 'The Stone Tape'

innocent pleasures. There's plenty of that here, as when the landlady at a local pub recalls some West Indian workers at the house mentioning "guppies... no, duppies, in the stone". Taskerlands stands for any large institution (Kneale scoped out the BBC's development labs at Kingswood Warren in Surrey) or even, perhaps, a nation conflicted as to whether to wipe the tapes of its own past, or to recapture them. (Auntie's notorious tendency to erase its own output at the time affected Kneale's creations too.)

The relationship between Greeley (a computer genius with mediumistic capabilities) and Brock (a visionary driven by ego and economics) is handled with great subtlety, as Kneale supplies the vaguest inklings of a possible past affair. The hauntings – a Victorian maid tumbling to her death – are seen in vanishingly brief glimpses, almost a subliminal afterimage. What lingers in Peter Sasdy's direction is the close-up agony of Asher's face, petrified by the

Kneale's teleplays have come to define a certain strain in British television infused with weirdness and creeping horror

disorienting effects of screams, electronic noise and supernatural presences. Kneale's script (and Richard Henry's production design) maintains a relentlessly gloomy scenario: the room is claustrophobically dark and full of abrasive noises; the brittle, scientific white and cream of the computer rooms and living quarters are often complemented by a low-level atonal synthesiser theme. The soundtrack, created by the BBC Radiophonic Workshop's Glynis Jones and Desmond Briscoe, is a model of its kind, evoking a spectrum from the menacing hum of 1970s computer technology to savage white noise. Forty years on, *The Stone Tape's* disturbing power has not yet begun to decay.

Filmed entirely on video (rare for 1972), the transfer has a raw, glittery immediacy heightened by occasional flaring from light sources and the often glimpsed, polished and scratched flooring of BBC TV studios. But the special effects, while primitive by modern standards, are used so sparingly – often they're merely abstract glowing lights – that far from 'dating' the film, they only heighten the mystery. The only special feature is a valuable one: a genial commentary by Kneale himself, interviewed by *Sight & Sound's* Kim Newman, lifted from the original BFI release. 📺



Nothing salacious: Friedkin's memoir sees the notorious director in penitent mode

HURRICANE BILLY BLOWS SOFT

THE FRIEDKIN CONNECTION: A MEMOIR

William Friedkin, HarperCollins, 512 pp, £19.69, ISBN 9780061775123

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

The William Friedkin of popular legend is 'Hurricane Billy', he of the blunt, no-bullshit interviews, the legendary terror immortalised by his depiction in Peter Biskind's dishy 1998 tome *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls*. He is the pushy, upstart, working-class Chicago Jew who made a pile off *The French Connection* (1971) and *The Exorcist* (1973) and didn't mind people knowing it, a Francophile dandy who swanned around Hollywood like he could do no wrong before his career was doomed by overweening pride and the ballooning budget of 1977's *Sorcerer*,

still prone to dropping f-bombs and making candid pronouncements like "The first sex I had was with a black hooker, five bucks a pop..."

But there's none of that in the filmmaker's autobiography, *The Friedkin Connection*, which seems determined in part to ameliorate this loutish, louche persona. "There's nothing salacious in this book," announces an author's note and, true to this promise, what follows sticks very nearly to a just-the-films approach. After early chapters that recount his shiftless youth in Chicago's North Side before finding a job and a sense of purpose at local TV affiliates, Friedkin the man steps aside almost entirely to make room for Friedkin the professional. On page 402, just before introducing his bride-to-be, studio executive Sherry Lansing, Friedkin recollects: "I had been unhappily married and divorced three times; I had two young sons I dearly loved." It's the first time that we have heard of any of this. Friedkin makes no mention of his marriage to Jeanne Moreau or

his relationship with Kitty Hawks, or of Kitty's father Howard, who boasted of suggesting the chase scene in *The French Connection*.

Throughout, Friedkin – who utilises telling chapter titles like 'The Tunnel at the End of the Light' and 'Hubris' – is in penitent mode, openly confessing to errors in judgement and conceding graciously in professional conflicts, albeit often in hindsight. (Friedkin had an ongoing argument with William Peter Blatty over the cutting of *The Exorcist*; more recently, he has publicly sparred with *French Connection* DP Owen Roizman.) Attributing his success largely to the fickle favour of what he calls the Movie Gods, Friedkin frequently second-guesses the artistic triumphs of his career. "I haven't made my *Citizen Kane*," the 77-year-old filmmaker says in the closing paragraph, "but there's more work to do." It is possible, perhaps, that recent health problems have prompted this sea change, yet one suspects at times that this chastened act is just

that. *The Friedkin Connection's* epigraph contains a quote from Elia Kazan's *Kazan on Directing*: "Arrogance, however disguised, is the essence of every artist." This is followed by Friedkin quoting none other than William Friedkin on "Camera Logic", as if to affirm Kazan's point.

If any particular point of pride comes through clearly, it's to do with Friedkin's own physical bravery. Making documentaries for the Wolper Company, Friedkin recalls riding along with Art Arfons in his jet-engine powered Green Monster as Arfons tried to break the land-speed record in Utah. Later, he talks of operating the camera in the back seat as a stunt driver tore through traffic at 90 mph under New York City elevated train tracks to capture footage for *The French Connection*, and of providing back-up on ride-alongs with NYPD detectives Eddie Egan and Sonny Grosso, the real-life models for the film's 'Popeye' Doyle and Buddy 'Cloudy' Russo. Friedkin also recounts socialising with safecrackers and playing poker with gangsters when in Boston to shoot *The Brink's Job* (1978), touring gay S&M clubs in Manhattan (and later paying off their mafia owners to shoot inside those clubs) when preparing to make *Cruising* (1980), and printing (and spending) fake \$20 bills made on the set of *To Live and Die in L.A.* (1985).

Fascinated with both sides of the law, Friedkin recalls socialising with safecrackers and spending fake \$20 bills

If there is any identifiable throughline in Friedkin's body of work, it's indicated in these associations: a fascination with both sides of the law and the porous boundary that separates them, running from his acclaimed 1965 short *The People vs. Paul Crump*, an urgent call to reopen the case of a death-row inmate in Chicago, to his latest film, 2011's *Killer Joe*, starring Matthew McConaughey as a detective moonlighting as a hitman. *Killer Joe* was Friedkin's second adaptation from a Tracy Letts stage play, following 2006's *Bug*, and the collaboration has been an agent of renewal for the director, who began his feature filmmaking career adapting theatre, shooting off-Broadway hit *The Boys in the Band* (1970) and Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* (1968). Pinter is one of the noteworthies who comes through most clearly in *The Friedkin Connection*, along with Blatty and a deeply conflicted Mercedes McCambridge on the set of *The Exorcist*, not to mention the star of Friedkin's first film, *Good Times* (1967), of whom the director says: "I've worked with talented people, but only a few geniuses. One of them was Sonny Bono."

The 18-certificated *Killer Joe's* fried-chicken fellatio scene proved that the director of the floridly blasphemous *Exorcist* has by no means lost his desire to provoke and offend. And, with that reputation in mind, it's hard to imagine anything more shocking than the autobiography that he has set down: modest, matter-of-fact, with the author's artistic arrogance quite successfully camouflaged. **S**

BRIGITTE BARDOT

By Ginette Vincendeau, BFI/Palgrave Macmillan, 184pp, £12.99, ISBN 9781844574926

Reviewed by David Thompson

Brigitte Bardot disappeared from the cinema screen in 1973. While the myth endures of the French free spirit with a perfect body, flowing blonde hair and a seductive pout, the lady herself lives on in her eighth decade, always ready to appear at the barricades for any injustice inflicted on animals and speak her far-from-politically-correct mind. Today, a younger audience might know her best from Laetitia Casta's exuberant impersonation in *Gainsbourg* (2010), or discover her in Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Mépris* (1963), in which the director never allows the audience to forget they are watching a figure who is beyond human. The majority of her 47 films have not stood the test of time and are rarely revived. But as a 20th-century symbol of liberated post-war woman and as a model of erotic femininity, Bardot unquestionably merits her place in the pantheon.

Though Ginette Vincendeau declares herself a fan, her "investigation" (as she calls it) is a serious and well-researched account of Brigitte Bardot as movie star and cultural phenomenon. In common with too much written on cinema today, the book in style seems to be aimed more at students than a general readership. As Bardot's autobiographies have never been translated into English, the obvious source for a more intimate appreciation of the star remains Roger Vadim, the man credited with discovering the young Brigitte who became her first husband and directed her in the film that brought her international fame as the indomitable 'sex kitten', *And God Created Woman...* (1956). In his memoirs, Vadim describes Bardot as a woman consumed by a constant need to feel passion,



Bardot: beyond human

quoting her as saying, "If only men were like the sun. I could spend the rest of my life stretched out sunbathing in peace. But with men I have to move on." Just as in her films she would often embody a woman driven by her physical needs, in her messy private life Bardot would go from lover to husband to lover to husband, always with a posse of photographers in pursuit. In *Vie privée* (1962), Louis Malle blurred fiction and reality to show how Bardot was oppressed by her absorption into the cult of celebrity. That film ended in her character's accidental death. Bardot herself attempted suicide on a number of occasions, and was evidently lucky to survive.

However, as Vincendeau makes clear, in her early years Bardot was complicit in the making of her own myth. She made her debut as a teenage model in 1949, the same year that *Paris Match* was launched, and was soon called for a screen test by director Marc Allégret and his protégé, Vadim. She made regular guest appearances at the Cannes Film Festival and appeared in 16 films (seven of them released in 1956) before *And God Created Woman...* In print, she even found favour with the young François Truffaut, though most mainstream critics were quick to point out her deficiencies in the acting department, mocking her willingness to expose her body. In truth, as Vincendeau affirms, her performance style was above all 'natural' and therefore went against the orthodoxy of trained actresses at the time. Bardot was a talented dancer who could move with great poise as well as energy and in the 1950s her occupancy of an ambiguous territory between child and woman enhanced her erotic appeal. Her personal fashion style became hugely influential, the trademark tight sweaters and gingham skirts a bold rejection of the *haute couture* of an earlier generation.

Following the scandalous success of *And God Created Woman...*, Bardot mostly went on to act in comedies, playing a limited range from naughty girls and ditz blonde to enterprising wives and hungry seductresses. She felt more satisfied when working for quality directors, whether of the old school (Claude Autant-Lara, Henri-Georges Clouzot) or the new (Malle, Godard). Bardot was particularly proud of *La Vérité* (1960), in which Clouzot pushed her to emotional extremes that mirrored her own turbulent emotional life at the time; a notorious punisher of actors, Clouzot slapped her on set, but received a sharp slap back. Over time, the roles increasingly parodied her now famous image: *Les Femmes* (1969) opens with a close-up of her fulsome lips, as if that is all we need to see. The career would end with a whimper, notably in the jaded antics of Vadim's *Don Juan* (1973), Bardot feeling that at 40, it was all over.

Vincendeau concludes her overview with the Warhol prints of Bardot's image, a confirmation of her status as a 20th-century icon in paintings that "capture her unique combination of sensuality, simplicity and naturalness – in other words the secret of her modernity and her enduring appeal". As with Bardot's movies, I'm not so convinced by the art but I cannot deny the potency of the subject. **S**

ERIC ROHMER: INTERVIEWS

Edited by Fiona Handyside, University Press of Mississippi, 224pp, £42, ISBN 9781617036880

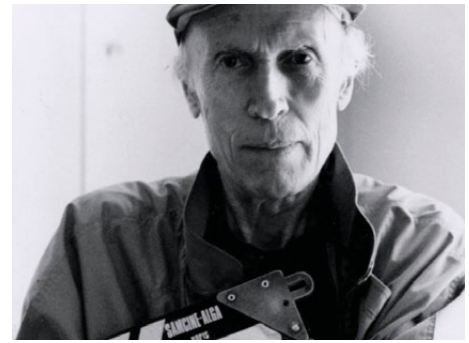
Reviewed by Geoff Andrew

A confession: since the late Eric Rohmer has long been one of my favourite filmmakers, I've occasionally considered writing a book about his work. The reason I've never done so is because I felt insufficiently erudite to do justice to the wealth of allusion in his films, particularly to literature, art and philosophy. For me, the finest commentator on Rohmer's oeuvre has always been the auteur himself – unsurprisingly, given the subtle intelligence, delicate wit and eloquent clarity of the conversations that constitute the most immediately obvious component of his idiosyncratic cinematic style.

So this latest addition to UPM's Conversations with Filmmakers series, edited by Fiona Handyside, is very welcome. It has its weaknesses. There are typos, errors born of ignorance or inadequate research (Daniel Toscan "at" Plantier rather than du Plantier, Robert rather than Raymond Depardon), and Handyside's own translations of the many French pieces in the collection boast bits of shaky grammar ("there's also links...") while somehow succeeding in

making Rohmer sound quite different from interview to interview. Indeed, as someone privileged to have interviewed him at length on four occasions, I fail to discern his distinctive manner of speaking at all in some pieces here; I can't, for instance, imagine him having said anything that would be best translated as "your average Joe". And, perhaps inevitably, the standard of the articles selected is uneven: Serge Daney and Louella Interim, discussing *Pauline à la plage* (1982), seem barely interested in or aware of how Rohmer made his films and why, while one brief, relatively recent English article, though fine in itself, feels featherweight in the context of the many far more detailed interviews preceding it in the book.

Despite excellent English-language pieces on Rohmer's early career by Gilbert Adair, Rui Nogueira and Graham Petrie – not to mention a fascinating look at the sexual politics of the *Contes moraux* by Beverly Walker, who unfortunately applied an inappropriately moralistic reading to Rohmer's use of that term – most interviews in the collection are French, from *Positif*, *Cahiers du cinéma* and elsewhere. This allows for the inclusion of (to this writer, at least) unfamiliar and substantial discussions of subjects like architecture and space, colour and framing, music and sound – and, it goes without saying, literature and the art of adaptation. However good or bad the interviewers themselves – and some, like the *Positif* writers apparently preoccupied by



Rohmer: the ideal interviewee

astrology, are fairly fanciful in their interpretation of Rohmer's work – their subject always comes across as modest, patient, enormously knowledgeable about a wide range of topics and passionate to the very end about cinema and making films. (Especially conspicuous are his keen sense of independence, his preference for working with as small a crew as possible and his abiding interest in and loyalty to his *nouvelle vague* colleagues, particularly Godard and Rivette). Notably sharper in his analytical skills and far less prone to prejudice and faddish cliché than many of his interrogators, he gives the impression of being the ideal interviewee, making this volume, whatever its shortcomings, invaluable to a proper understanding of one of cinema's true originals. **S**

RITA MORENO: A MEMOIR

By Rita Moreno, Celebra, 288pp, £17.70, ISBN 9780451416377

Review by Peter Tonguette

To read the engaging new memoir by Rita Moreno is to be reminded of the skillset once required of film performers. "I arrived in Hollywood during an era when you couldn't just be a singer or a dancer," she writes. "You did it all or you had trouble finding work." Consequently, Moreno was well prepared when she came up for roles in films like *Singin' in the Rain* (1951) and *West Side Story* (1961); she had been taking dance lessons since the age of six and was barely a teenager when she appeared on Broadway in *Skydrift*.

It did not all come easily for Moreno. Her range was tested when she endured a three-day audition for *West Side Story*'s co-directors, Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins. She sang well and acted convincingly, but was nervous about the dancing. "What if I wasn't good enough?" she remembers worrying. "What if the steps I had learned weren't the same? What if I couldn't manage the turns?" She got the part – and won an Oscar.

While Moreno's prose is seldom more than pedestrian ("He wasn't a big star yet – except at seduction," she writes of Anthony Quinn) and she often seems to be writing for readers unfamiliar with show business (she describes the West End as being analogous to "Broadway in New York"), she is refreshingly honest in describing the challenges she and her mother faced as Puerto Rican immigrants. In the Bronx, young Rosita Alverio found little but bedbugs and a bad case of chickenpox, and the world got no less threatening when she headed west. As a budding star, she was the recipient

of unwanted advances from Harry Cohn and Buddy Adler, and there is a nightmarish account of a fitful relationship with Marlon Brando, which eventually led her to attempt suicide.

Moreno is also perspicacious in describing the racist typecasting she was subjected to, despite her multitude of talents. "I guess they figured that if there was some sort of accent, darker skin, or an exotic look, a little Puerto Rican girl could play the role," she writes. One

"I guess they figured if there was some sort of accent, darker skin, or an exotic look, a little Puerto Rican girl could play the role"

of her most memorable later film appearances was in Mike Nichols's *Carnal Knowledge* (1971), in which she played a prostitute, Louise, and she regarded the brief but showy role in equivocal terms: "In a way, Louise was the highest-evolved form of the subservient slave girls I had played from the start of my career."

But between *West Side Story* and *The Ritz* (Richard Lester's 1976 film in which she reproduced her greatest creation, Googie Gomez), Moreno's cinematic legacy is secure. Fetchingly modest for being so accomplished, she recounts her incredulity on Oscar night. "All I managed to say was, 'I do not believe it! And I leave you with that!' before I ran off," she writes. But she shouldn't have been surprised. Unlike some of today's stars, Rita Moreno deserved to be there. **S**



I like to be in America: Moreno in her Oscar-winning role in 'West Side Story'

THE FILMS OF JOSEPH H. LEWIS

Edited by Gary D. Rhodes, Wayne State University Press, 284pp, \$31.95, ISBN9780814334621

Reviewed by Tony Rayns

Like Jules Dassin, Anatole Litvak, Abraham Polonsky and the better-established Lewis Milestone, Joseph H. Lewis (1907-2000) was a left-leaning Jew of Russian descent who punched above his weight in wartime and post-war Hollywood. He began directing B movies in 1937 and had notched up 40-odd features (including some so-called 'nervous As', with higher budgets and bona-fide stars) by the time he switched to directing for TV in 1958. His achievements as a director attracted little attention while he was on the job but he rated a supportive paragraph in Andrew Sarris's *The American Cinema* (1968), got his first enthusiastic magazine spread in the LA glossy *Cinema* (1971) and was then celebrated by Myron Meisel in a first-rate essay published in the anthology *Kings of the Bs* (1975).

A Joseph H. Lewis cult took shape in London after a hugely successful revival of *The Big Combo* (1955) at the Electric Cinema in the late 1970s; revivals of *So Dark the Night* (1946) and other titles followed. The BFI's *Monthly Film Bulletin* published nine retrospective reviews and a career checklist in its March/April 1980 issues. The capper that clinched Lewis's status in the UK was Bernardo Bertolucci's presentation of *Gun Crazy* (1950) on BBC2's *Film Club* in 1988 – in a double-bill with Godard's *Breathless*.

Although Lewis toured European cinemathèques (including London's NFT) with a mini-retrospective of his films in the summer of 1985, we haven't exactly been inundated with smart critical writing on him in the last quarter-century. There's been the book *Joseph H. Lewis: Overview, Interview and Filmography* by Francis M. Nevins (1998), some useful essays on the *Senses of Cinema* website and, best of all, Jim Kitses's exemplary monograph *Gun Crazy* (1996) for the BFI Film Classics series. This collection of writings assembled by Gary Rhodes (of Queen's University, Belfast) sets out to claim Lewis for the academy. It's a mixed blessing.

Lewis is as fascinating in his way as his Poverty Row contemporary Edgar G. Ulmer, and no easier to pin down. His claim to serious attention is not in doubt: his name appears on enough extraordinary films to prove that he was an authentic 'man of cinema'. Was he also an auteur? If so, how do we demonstrate it and how do we analyse his distinctiveness? He has co-writer credit on only one of his films (the admirable anti-fascist vehicle for Anna May Wong in 1943, *Bombs over Burma*) but is known to have 'doctored' some of the other scripts that producers foisted on him, and from 1949 onwards seems to have gone out of his way to accommodate the work of blacklisted writers such as Dalton Trumbo and Nedrick Young, latterly hiding behind 'fronts'. It's fairly evident that some of the traits of his distinctive *mise en scène* sprang from the circumstances in which he worked: the penchant for framing characters through foreground objects (burning grates, wagon wheels) in the early quickies represents an obvious attempt to liven up inert material, and the penchant for



An authentic man of cinema: Lewis undoubtedly made many extraordinary films, but was he an auteur?

extended takes (cross-cutting between speakers or antagonists is the exception rather than the rule in all Lewis movies) represents a creative response to a shortage of time and money. But his mature 'style', which reaches Sternberg-like heights in several of the films from his second decade, is not just rooted in resourcefulness and pragmatism, even if a faint whiff of the disreputable lingers.

Most of the writers here, no doubt keen to advance their bids for tenure, try to distance themselves from old-style auteurist readings – a tricky intellectual gambit, given that the one thing which holds the volume together is a shared assumption that Lewis is a director of

Lewis's status in the UK was clinched by Bertolucci's 1988 presentation of 'Gun Crazy' in a TV double bill with 'Breathless'



Withholding gratification: 'The Big Combo'

above-average interest. (The sole exception is Michael Grost, a non-academic who is happy to chart the stylistic and thematic continuities across Lewis's film and TV work – especially the gay motifs.) How to celebrate Lewis in non-auteurist terms? Yannis Tzioumakis tries to do it by comparing Lewis's three early East Side Kids movies with other B movies of the period, providing some useful data on Monogram and its rivals in the process. David Hogan tries to do it by writing a mini-history of police procedurals to set *The Undercover Man* (1949) in its generic context. Michael Lee cleverly approaches *Gun Crazy* through Victor Young's score. Marlisa Santos, on the other hand, contrives to discuss *My Name is Julia Ross* (1945) without once mentioning *Rebecca*, made five years earlier and surely the direct source of much of the imagery.

If there's one issue that surfaces repeatedly in Lewis's best work, it's the attempt to express aberrant psychologies and sexualities by 'getting inside' them (precisely the aspect which seduced Lewis's surrealist champions, such as Ado Kyrou) found in the dramas, the westerns and the noirs alike. Unexpectedly, the best essay here is Hugh Manon's Lacanian analysis of what he calls the withholding strategies in Lewis films: the way the director makes the viewer conscious of his or her desires by partially denying them, visually or aurally. Manon wittily argues that Lewis's artistic identity is found in his knowing refusal to gratify the viewer's desire to see, hear and understand everything. Just like Lewis's own status as the 'author' of his films, some things remain unknown. ☹



**'Raise the Titanic?'
It would have been cheaper to lower the Atlantic.'**
Lew Grade, Producer 1980

Ever wished you'd started out with all the inside information?

MA Independent Film Business

The Exeter/LFS Independent Film Business MA is the first postgraduate degree to take you inside the independent and international film business. Combining world-class teaching in Exeter and London with a unique practitioner-driven industry access programme, it provides you with the key business tools and contacts needed to build a career in film production, distribution or sales.

This innovative one year Masters includes research placements in UK film companies, practical production opportunities, mentoring, and a research trip to the Berlin Film Festival.

It's designed to develop the next generation of producers and executives, accelerating your film career and bringing both excellence and innovation into international filmmaking.

Course leader: Angus Finney, author of "The International Film Business" Routledge 2010

Scholarships available - One Year Programme starting September 2013



More info at www.exeter.ac.uk/filmbusiness

Photo: ITV Studios Global Entertainment

Postgraduate programmes

Department of Drama: Theatre, Film, Television

MA programmes

- Film and Television Production
- Film and Television Studies
- Archaeology for Screen Media

Research degrees

- MPhil
- MLitt / PhD

Staff expertise

Staff expertise is recognised as internationally excellent in Film and Television Histories, Practice as Research and professional production (fiction and documentary):

ALEX CLAYTON, PETER FALCONER, KATIE MACK, JACQUELINE MAINGARD, PETER METELERKAMP, PETER MILNER, KRISTIAN MOEN, ANGELA PICCINI, HELEN PIPER, SARAH STREET

Tel +44(0)117 331 8443 **Email** artf-gradschool-admissions@bristol.ac.uk
bristol.ac.uk/arts/gradschool

London Academy

established since 1996

Media Film TV

Now enrolling - part-time evening, day or weekend

Learn production skills

- Camera + Lighting
- Avid Media Composer
- Film Making
- Screen Writing
- Film Editing
- Production Management
- Film Producer
- Final Cut Pro X
- TV Production

Get your career moving with over 75 courses:

- Acting ● Film ● Make-up ● Photography
- TV Presenter ● TV Production ● Radio + Voice
- Adobe ● Avid ● FCPx

0207 138 2909
www.media-courses.com

Continue your journey at UEL

MA Filmmaking

Recruiting now for September 2013, this innovative programme gives you the chance to study moving image in an international context. Encompassing documentary, fiction, artists' film/video and multi-channel installation, the course offers a diverse range of practice-led and theoretically informed core and option modules. Working in a collaborative environment in the Moving Image Studio, students produce a portfolio of films, with the choice to shoot on 16mm.

For more information:

Visit: uel.ac.uk/mafilm
 Call: 0208 223 3333
 Email: study@uel.ac.uk

LEARN FILMMAKING ACTING FOR FILM

PHOTOGRAPHY • PRODUCING • DOCUMENTARY
BROADCAST JOURNALISM • MUSICAL THEATRE
SCREENWRITING • CINEMATOGRAPHY • EDITING
GAME DESIGN • 3D ANIMATION • MUSIC VIDEO



NEW YORK FILM ACADEMY

School of Film • Acting • Photography

The Most Hands-on Intensive Programs in the World

16mm • 35mm • Hi-Def • **RED EPIC®** • Super 16mm • HD SLR

+1-212-674-4300 | WWW.NYFA.EDU

**ONE & TWO-YEAR CONSERVATORY • TWO-YEAR MASTER OF FINE ARTS
BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS • ONE-YEAR MASTER OF ARTS
ASSOCIATE OF FINE ARTS • SHORT-TERM INTENSIVE WORKSHOPS**

**NEW YORK CITY • LOS ANGELES, SHOOTING ON THE BACKLOT OF UNIVERSAL STUDIOS • ABU DHABI, UAE
AUSTRALIA • FLORENCE • HARVARD UNIVERSITY* • DISNEY STUDIOS* • PARIS* • JAPAN* • KOREA* • CHINA* • INDIA***

All credits and degrees are solely granted by the New York Film Academy California. All degree programs take place on the backlot of Universal Studios, Hollywood. All workshops are solely owned and operated by the New York Film Academy and such workshops are not affiliated with Universal Studios, Harvard University, or Disney Studios. *Summer Only.

BEFORE SUNSET



"Baby, you're gonna miss that plane": Ethan Hawke, above, enjoys Julie Delpy's Nina Simone impression, below, in 'Before Sunset'

The second in Richard Linklater's *Before* trilogy lets audiences write their own epilogue – a pleasure undimmed by this year's follow-up

By Ryan Gilbey

The Saturday-morning serial may be long dead, but the cliffhanger ending is enjoying a partial revival in the unlikely setting of the US independent (or indie-flavoured) scene. John Sayles's *Limbo* (1999), Kelly Reichardt's *Meek's Cutoff* (2011) and Lynn Shelton's *Your Sister's Sister* (2012) are among those that resort to the unresolved resolution, the pay-off that doesn't quite pay off. Fine though each of those films is, none earns its elliptical conclusion as comprehensively as *Before Sunset* (2003).

This is the filling in Richard Linklater's *Before* sandwich. Preceded by *Before Sunrise* (1994), in which two twentysomethings – French Celine (Julie Delpy) and American Jesse (Ethan Hawke) – wander around Vienna shooting the breeze and falling in love, and followed by *Before Midnight* (2012), which catches up with the pair in their early forties, *Before Sunset* is the shortest and most urgent part of the trilogy. Unlike its companion pieces, it unfolds in real time without conflations: as the former brief-encounterers grab a frantic hour together in Paris before Jesse has to return to his wife and child in the US, we feel keenly each onscreen time-check, each incremental deferral of Jesse's departure. This adherence to time shapes and informs the suspenseful final scene.

Like Celine and Jesse, whose conversations drift towards mortality from the moment they meet, *Before Sunset* has scarcely begun when it declares its preoccupation with endings. In the first scene, Jesse is fielding questions from journalists about his debut novel, based on the

events of that night in Vienna nine years earlier. One reporter wants to know about the note on which the story ends: did the lovers meet again six months later, as they had promised? Jesse points out that each reader is revealed as a cynic or a romantic depending on their answer to this question. But the final minutes of *Before Sunset* are slightly different. When the couple's Parisian ramble takes them finally to Celine's cluttered apartment, the emphasis has shifted. The characters are deeper into adulthood. They have made mistakes. Having got as far as Celine's home – and how odd it is to see even one of these normally transient characters in their domestic setting – it seems unlikely that they will go their separate ways. They're getting another chance, like the heroines of Rivette's *Celine and Julie Go Boating* (1975), who travel back in time repeatedly to try to avert a murder. And if that sounds tenuous, remember that this is the only one of the *Before* films in which Celine and Jesse go boating.

'Before Sunset' unfolds in real time; we feel keenly each incremental deferral of Jesse's departure



Even so, the abruptness of the ending is a shock. Jesse selects a CD to play while Celine fusses around in her open-plan kitchen. His choice is apt: Nina Simone's live version of 'Just in Time' ("Just in time/You've found me"). Moments earlier, Celine has played on her acoustic guitar a delicate composition written about her night with Jesse – a beautiful song with a touch of the student common room about it. Hearing 'Just in Time' she is transformed into a ravenously sexual being. She impersonates Simone's shuffling, sashaying movements and her sleepily flirtatious banter ("Ooh... Ooh yeah baby... I love you too..."). She is still channelling Simone when she jabs a taunting finger at Jesse and delivers the line: "Baby, you're gonna miss that plane." Cut to a medium close-up of Jesse, with the camera moving in slowly, tentatively, as he breaks into a cat-about-to-get-the-cream smile and replies: "I know." Then it's back to a medium shot of Celine still lost in her woozy Nina Simone daydream. The shot fades to black, but the song continues. If all movie characters continue to live their lives after the end credits, this is a nice reminder that – while *Before Sunset* may be over – Celine and Jesse are going to carry on without us.

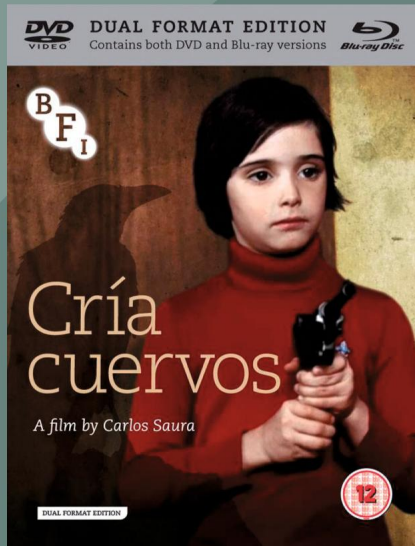
Jesse is obsessed with parallel universes where infinite versions of reality play out endlessly. As much as I admire the third *Before* movie, I like to think there is a universe where it was never made, leaving audiences to wonder for eternity what happened next for Celine and Jesse. That Linklater, Hawke and Delpy elected to fill in the blanks with *Before Midnight* should not diminish the daring of those final moments of *Before Sunset*. For the nine years between the second and third instalments, audiences have been left to concoct for themselves any number of outcomes on the theme of *Before* and after. ⑨



'Before Midnight' is released on 21 June, and will be reviewed in the next issue



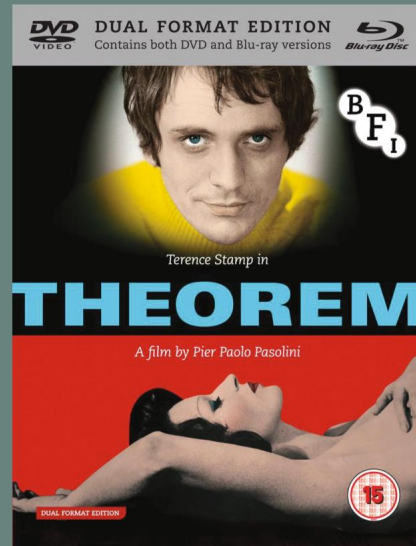
WORLD CINEMA GREATS



© VIDEO MERCURY FILMS S.A. - All rights reserved

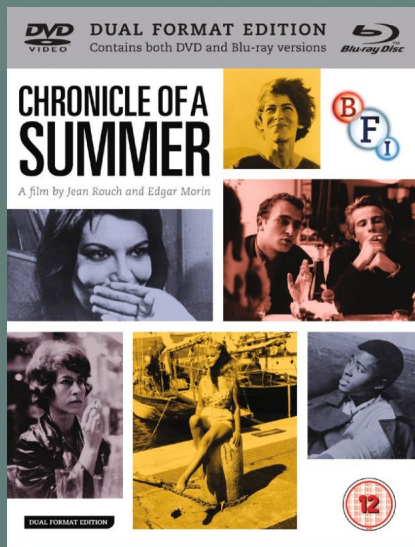
SPAIN | 1976 | CARLOS SAURA

Stunning performance by Ana Torrent as the disturbed eight-year-old girl living in Madrid with her two sisters and mourning the death of her mother (Geraldine Chaplin).



ITALY | 1968 | PIER PAOLO PASOLINI

A handsome stranger seduces the members of a middle-class Italian family before mysteriously leaving. Terence Stamp and Silvana Mangano star in this enigmatic, arthouse classic.



FRANCE | 1961 | JEAN ROUCH AND EDGAR MORIN

With its groundbreaking use of handheld cameras and observational techniques this film has been a key influence on many documentary filmmakers.



USA | 1977 | JOHN CASSAVETES

A leading Broadway actress confronts her personal demons in the run up to the opening of her new play. A superb performance by Gena Rowlands in this emotionally-charged US classic.

A PECCADILLO PICTURES RELEASE



BEST ACTRESS
FESTIVAL DE CANNES



OFFICIAL SELECTION
UN CERTAIN REGARD
FESTIVAL DE CANNES



"PROFOUNDLY
MOVING"

DAVID HUGHES
EMPIRE



"A POWERHOUSE
EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE"

TIM ROBEY
THE TELEGRAPH



"A MASTERCLASS
IN FILM-MAKING"

TREVOR JOHNSTON
TIME OUT

OUR CHILDREN

(À PERDRE LA RAISON) A FILM BY JOACHIM LAFOSSE **BASED ON TRUE EVENTS**
STARRING A PROPHET'S TAHAR RAHIM NIELS ARESTRUP & ÉMILIE DEQUENNE



IN CINEMAS **MAY 10**

OurChildrenUK

CURZON
RENOIR

ICA

ODEON
PANTON STREET

CINÉ
LUMIÈRE

IFFI
Irish Film Institute

Picturehouse
ARTS CAMBRIDGE
01223 504444

SHOWROOM
WORKSTATION
SHEFFIELD

HYDE PARK
PICTURE HOUSE
LEEDS PREMIER ART HOUSE CINEMA

RITZY
BRIXTON

Picturehouse
CLAPHAM
0871 902 5727
www.picturehouses.co.uk

